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STUDIES IN PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Children  
in the  
Nursery  
School

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DOROTHY E. MAY

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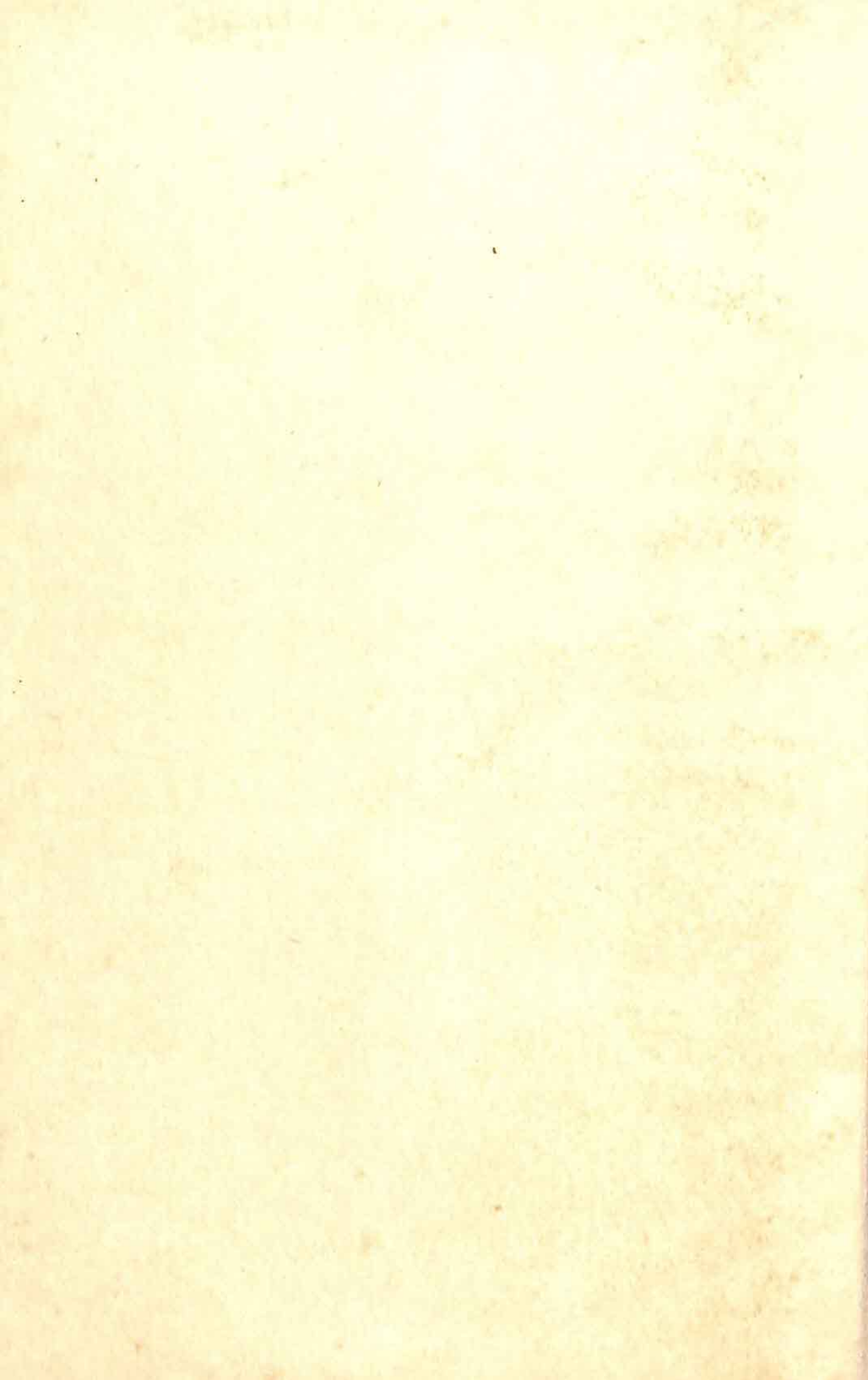
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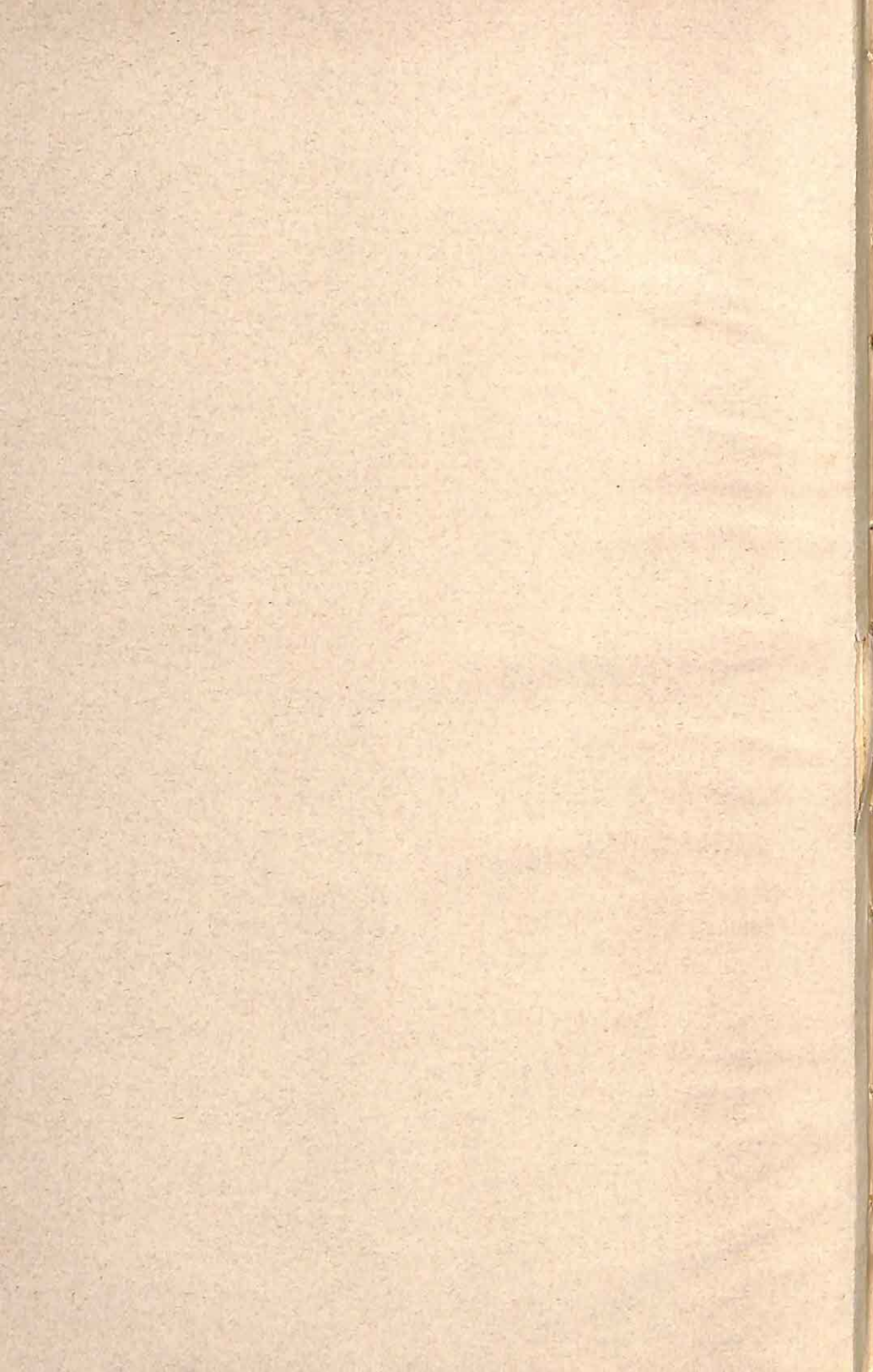
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## CHILDREN IN THE NURSERY SCHOOL

This volume, Publication Number 13 of the University of Bristol Institute of Education, is the first of two "Studies of Personal Adjustment in Early Childhood". The second volume will deal with Children in the Infant School.





# Children in the Nursery School

*Studies of Personal Adjustment in Early Childhood*

DOROTHY E. MAY



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WARWICK SQUARE, LONDON E.C.4



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21.8.2008  
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## PREFACE

During my early experience as a teacher of young children, I found myself faced with the fact that there were some children who remained enigmas to me and to whose problems I was unable to find a clue. Some children, I found, behaved in very odd ways: there was, for instance, the newly admitted five-year-old who, during her first weeks in school, could not walk straight across the room but would sidle round close to the walls, then make a sudden dive for her table and hide beneath it. There she would stay until, as the morning's work got under way, she became able to emerge and to take some part. One wondered what had happened in her earlier years to cause her to behave in this way.

There were others who did not stand out as being "odd" in such obvious ways, but who nevertheless presented difficulties with which, as a young teacher, I found myself inadequate to deal. Reluctance to learn on the part of some children and inability on the part of others were perhaps the least of these difficulties; the problems to which I found it difficult to discover the clues, or upon the solution to which I stumbled accidentally, were those concerned with a child's adjustment to life—to himself, to others, to his family, and to the world in general, sometimes expressed in unduly aggressive and defiant behaviour, sometimes, less obviously, in apathy and lack of drive, and, in a small proportion of cases, in very puzzling behaviour.

For the young teacher faced with the practical difficulty of dealing with "problem children", such behaviour can easily assume undue proportions, particularly if the children causing the difficulty are superficially judged as "naughty" or "stupid" or "odd", rather than as being in special need of help. Without the necessary clues to the understanding of such children, attempts to deal directly with any specific behaviour problems are often unsuccessful, for the question still remains "What has given rise to these difficulties?"

The way to the understanding of young children and of problems such as these was gradually opened for me, in the first instance, as I became familiar with the work of Dr. Susan Isaacs, first through her books, then by contact with her as one of her students in the Department of Child Development, University of London. What she did so superbly was to pin-point specific problems, and so help her students to see them within the setting of a child's development



that they were led to see that it was not the specific difficulties with which a teacher should be concerned, but the individual child, whose problem behaviour might be one of the ways by which he was revealing his own personal relation to life, and at the same time demonstrating his need for help in the normal business of growing up.

Since so many of the problems which, as a young teacher, I had met in young children were those arising in connection with human relationships, it seemed clear that, in the endeavour to understand such problems, this was an aspect in the development of young children which would be likely to repay careful study. In my first attempts in 1933,<sup>1</sup> which were carried out with the help and encouragement of Dr. Susan Isaacs, the emphasis was upon the nature of the social relationships occurring in the nursery school. This investigation was developed further when in 1937, as holder of the Leon Fellowship for Educational Research, I had the opportunity to continue the study of the social relationships of young children, endeavouring during this year of full-time research to discover their origin and significance and to gain at the same time a deeper understanding of the importance to a child of his play with toys and creative materials, either when alone or when playing in a small group. In this work I was specially indebted to the members of the Leon Bequest Committee and to Professor H. R. Hamley for their interest and support. The preparation of this work for publication could not be attempted at the time (1939) because the outbreak of war brought with it heavy responsibilities connected with the full-time residential care of eighty children under five years of age, a task which left no time for carrying on research or for preparing for publication even an interim report.

After the war (1948 to 1957) the implications of these earlier studies were explored by a small research group<sup>2</sup> which was sponsored by the Bristol Institute of Education and for which I was responsible. This group was particularly concerned with the study of certain aspects of creative activity, the material for which was collected by members of the group in the course of their daily work. In the study of this material it became clear that the later work was a development of the earlier and that there was so much in

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Social Development in Children of 2 to 4 Years of Age, 1933 to 1934.* Department of Child Development, University of London Institute of Education.

<sup>2</sup> The group included a mother, two or three teachers of young children, a psychiatrist, a research worker and two University and Training College lecturers in Education.



common in the two investigations that they could usefully be brought together as studies of personal adjustment in early childhood, the earlier study dealing with children of 2 to 5 years in the nursery school, the later study dealing with children of 5 to 8 years in the infant school.<sup>1</sup>

In my work as a practising teacher in nursery and infant schools, in the training of students for teaching and also in my studies of young children during periods of full-time and spare-time research I have been convinced that in order to meet the deeper needs of children it is necessary to understand the forces underlying their development. It was because of the willing co-operation of the members of the research group who were working together during those nine years to achieve this greater understanding of the needs of children and who were prepared to work experimentally in an endeavour to achieve this aim, that it was possible both to test out the basis upon which the earlier studies of nursery school children had been made and to build upon that foundation in the study of children of 5 to 8 years of age. I am greatly indebted to these workers, to the Director of the Bristol Institute of Education, and to the Institute research committee whose interest and support made this work possible.

I am indebted and deeply grateful to the local education authorities, and to the Head-teachers and class-teachers in schools in various parts of the country who have so generously given to my students, both during their training and after leaving college, the necessary freedom and opportunity to work out their ideas, and who have themselves co-operated in a variety of ways, and to the many students who have contributed so largely by their willingness to be experimental.

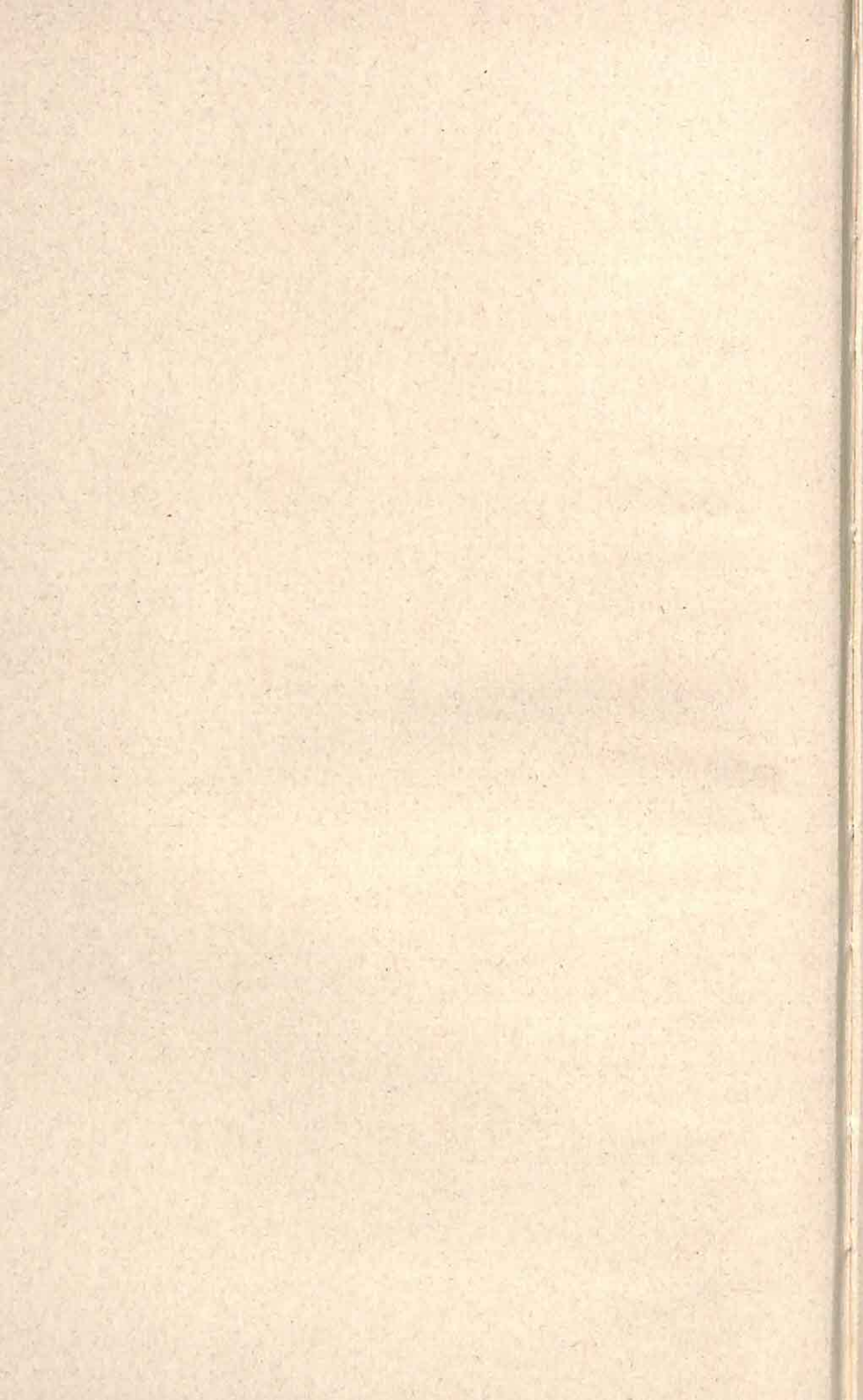
My special thanks are due to those who have generously given up time to assist with secretarial work or to read and correct the script and who have made many valuable criticisms and suggestions.

To all who have helped either directly or indirectly, and who have in various ways made this work possible, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness and express my gratitude.

DOROTHY E. MAY

Bristol, 1962

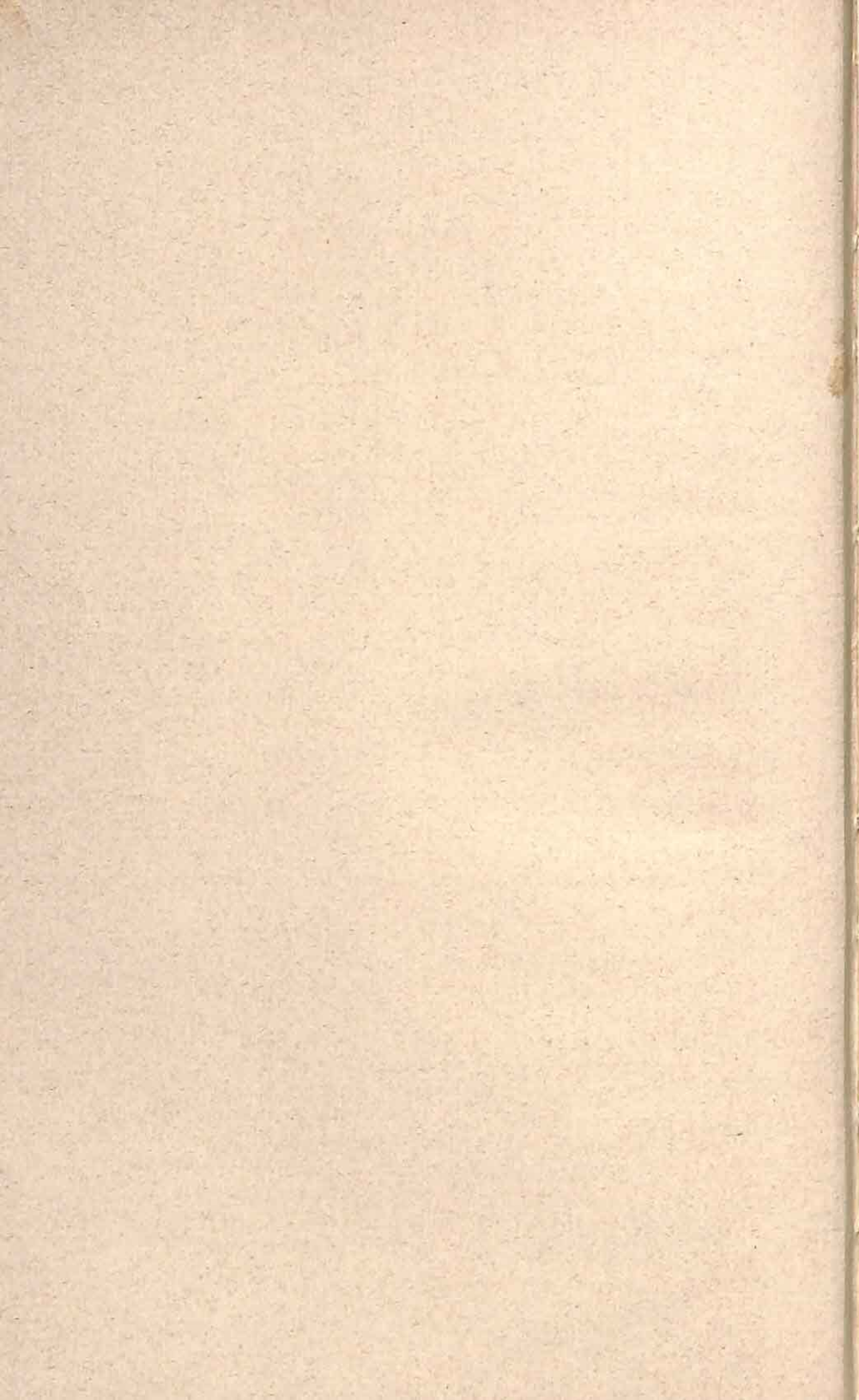
<sup>1</sup> *Children in the Infant School* is in preparation.





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## INTRODUCTION

### THE NATURE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this study—the understanding of children who present difficulties in the class-room—might suggest that it is an investigation dealing with problem children as such. It is, however, an attempt to learn more about the significance of social development as one aspect of a child's personal adjustment, in so far as this can be studied within the social setting of the nursery school, and to reach some understanding of the problems with which the teacher has to deal in helping young children to achieve personal adjustment.

The nursery school, providing an environment which has been specially planned with the needs of children of 2 to 5 years in mind, is a place where standards of behaviour are not arbitrarily laid down by the adults responsible for the children, but where they are related to the individual child's stage of development. It offers to young children opportunities and scope for satisfying play with a variety of toys and materials; it is a place where they may find their own means of making social contact with other children and where they may discover the basis for forming their own spontaneous groups in play together. Moreover, during my many years of experience with young children, I have found that the nursery school is a place where young children may find opportunity for and the means of resolving some of their problems of personal adjustment. From the point of view of the research worker, therefore, the nursery school provides an ideal setting for studying the personal adjustment of young children as seen in their social relations with others, and in their use of the play environment provided there.

It is in the study of this interaction between the child and his material and social environment that I have found questions relating to his personal adjustment coming to the fore. When a child is making discoveries about the material environment in which he finds himself, about the people in that environment and about himself in relation to those people, what private and personal view of life is he building up? Does this view differ from that of adults? Do a child's difficulties in personal adjustment occur when "reality" as seen by him differs from "reality" as seen by other children and by adults? Is this one of the sources of misunderstandings, and is it from such misunderstandings that problem behaviour stems?



The insidious way in which things may go wrong because of misunderstandings may be seen in the following example of the breakdown in satisfactory relations between a small child and her parents within the setting of her own home. A long sequence of difficulties had occurred in connection with the management of this little girl of two years when her persistent refusal of solid food when she was cutting a tooth caused disagreement between the parents and a widening gap between them and the child, owing to their misunderstanding of her interpretation of the situation and of her feelings about it. Whereas the mother was inclined to be lenient about the refusal of food, the father felt that the time had come to let the child know who was "master". Thus each meal-time became the occasion for a battle of wills when, more often than not, the parents had to admit themselves defeated.

This initial difficulty was followed by others. The child became very dependent and demanding, often waking at night and wanting her mother, refusing during the day to be parted from her, and screaming if a door was closed between herself and her mother. There was a breakdown in bladder control during the day as well as at night, and, what seemed to the parents to be the "last straw", she began to "steal" food. In an endeavour to offset the child's increasing dependence, the parents tried to encourage her to be independent and self-reliant, with the result that she would have outbursts of temper when expected to fend for herself. Bathing and bed-time procedures were carried out in a brisk and businesslike way, but after she had been tucked up, kissed and left alone, only a few minutes would elapse before she was calling for her mother.

Seen merely as a series of objective facts, the various kinds of difficult behaviour were quite incomprehensible to the parents, who felt that they had always tried to do their best for the child. Moreover, because it seemed to them imperative to ensure that the child should achieve greater stability and independence before the arrival of their second child in a few months' time, they were greatly troubled because she seemed to be showing increasing instability and was becoming more rather than less dependent.

The clue to these difficulties was found when the parents ceased to look at the objective facts merely from their own angle and began to consider them from the point of view of the child and of her feelings about them. This happened when the parents changed their attitude to her as they began to appreciate the significance of her behaviour, and to be aware of the significance to *her* of their reaction to her behaviour.

It seemed fairly clear, from the child's standpoint, that the meal-



time difficulties and the resulting tension had made her feel that she was "naughty", and this had given rise to the fear that her parents might no longer love her and might even leave her. This meant that any separation from the mother was intolerable, and it became imperative for her to convince herself that her mother was still there, particularly at night. The tension caused by this increasing insecurity resulted in a breakdown in bladder control, which itself accentuated the feeling of insecurity. The "stealing" of food may have been to satisfy hunger, but it may equally well have been a valiant attempt on the child's part to meet the parents half-way over this matter of feeding, by an indication of her willingness to eat if she were allowed to take the initiative.

Once the parents had grasped the nature of the problem and had accepted the reality and importance of the child's feelings, it became clear to them how the problem might be solved. The first essential was to convince the child in tangible ways that, whatever happened, she was dearly loved and wanted. This was done in a variety of ways. The mother gave up more time to her during the bathing and bed-time routines, making it a daily practice to nurse the child before putting her into bed so as to let her feel the warmth of her mother's affection before she was left alone in her room. During the day, the mother made it possible for the child to do things with her; they shared things, they worked and played together. A compromise was reached about feeding; food was available during the day when the child needed it, and at meal-times she was allowed to choose whether or not she would eat and, within reason, what she would eat.

Within a few weeks the difficulties had passed and she was once again the happy, contented child that the parents feared they had lost. When, a few months later, a new baby arrived for the mother, a new baby doll also arrived for the child so that mother and daughter could care for their babies together. If the parents had not, in time, reached some understanding of their little daughter's point of view, it is more than probable that the coming of the new baby would have seemed to the child the confirmation of her worst fears, and it is likely that her problem behaviour would have become more difficult to deal with.

The establishment of satisfactory relationships in early childhood seems to be closely bound up with the meaning which such relationships hold for the child and with his feelings about them. In a study of the personal adjustment of young children, and, in particular, of "problem" children, the importance and far-reaching effects of a child's ideas about the things that happen to him and to the people he loves and of the feelings that he has about them, need



to be recognised at the outset. When, for instance, jealousy is felt by the first child at the advent of the "new baby", it may stem not so much from the objective fact of the presence of the new baby in the family, but from the distortion of the fact in the older child's mind because of his feeling-reaction to this event, i.e., in terms of his inner conviction that he is no longer loved and wanted, a conviction for which there may be no foundation in the objective situation, but which may arise from the intensity of his own conflicting feelings about it.

Thus, although the child's exploration of the "external reality" of the material and social environment may appear to adults to be concerned with a variety of ordinary everyday experiences, yielding discoveries which may, from an adult's point of view, be expressed in terms of objective facts, I have found, from long experience with young children, that such objective facts may sometimes be very much distorted and confused in the child's mind by his feelings about the experiences from which the facts are derived. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that if the feelings aroused are strong and painful, they may seem more real to the child than the objective facts which have given rise to them, and may underlie some of the misunderstandings which occur.

In my endeavour, therefore, to discover what is responsible for the personal adjustment of young children, I have found myself faced with these conflicting forms of "reality"—the reality of the objective facts and events in the external world, and at the same time, the "reality" of the personal interpretation of those same facts and events, an interpretation which seems to be based upon the individual's feeling-reaction to them. To arrive at that understanding of young children which might supply a clue to some of the problems of adjustment, I found it necessary to endeavour to understand more about these conflicting "realities".

The question which has gradually become formulated as the basic problem underlying both the earlier and the later investigations is this question of the relation between the objective reality of the external world and the inner psychic reality of a child's feelings about facts and events, and the relation of these two aspects of reality to his achievement of personal adjustment.

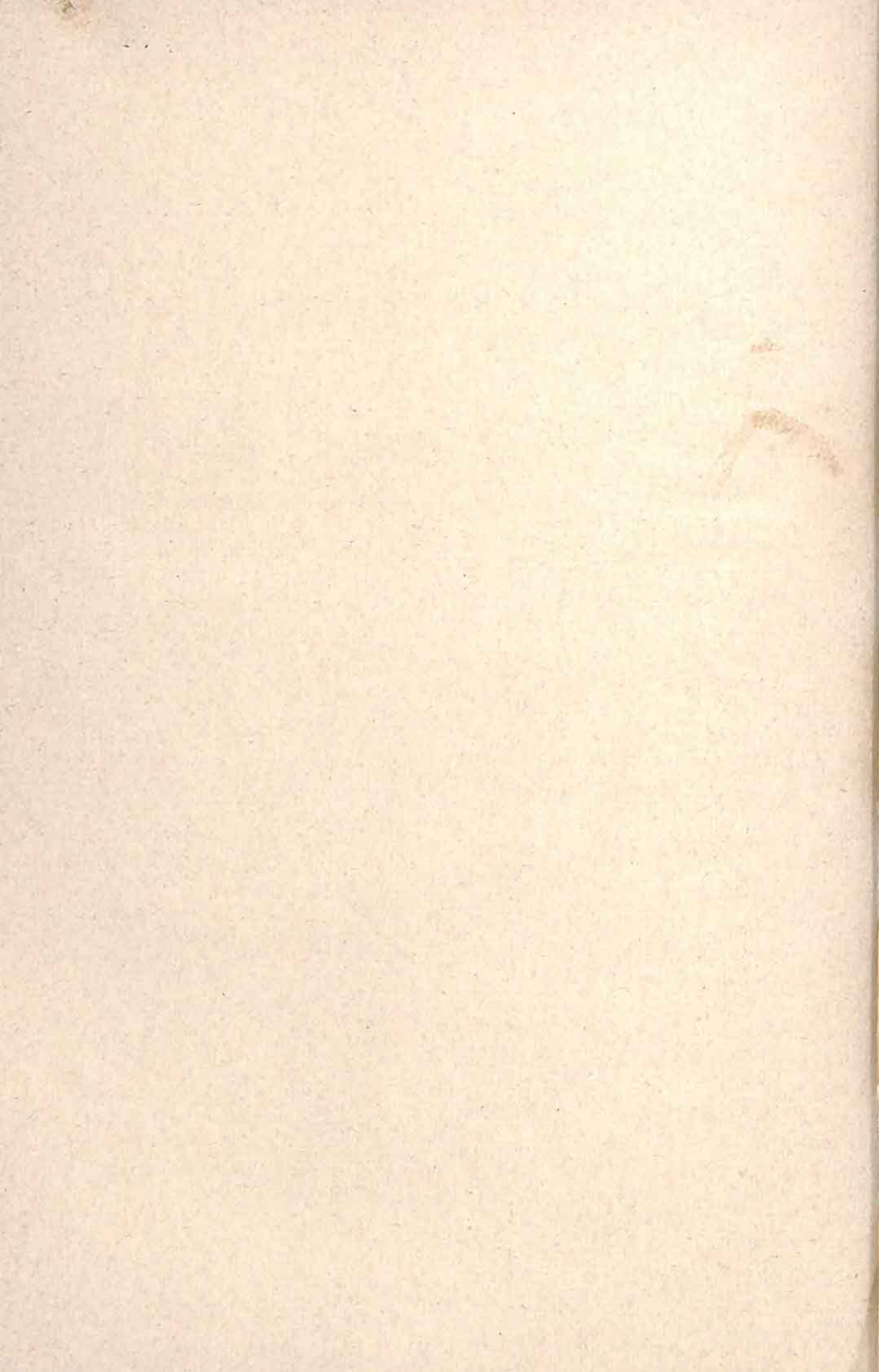
It will be obvious that such a study, while having a basis of observed facts, demands from the observer something more than an objective attitude towards those facts. It demands from her the ability so to identify herself with the child that her intuitive interpretation of those facts in terms of their significance for the child is as



near as possible to the personal interpretation of those facts by the child. I have endeavoured to achieve this by working from observed facts to an appreciation of their significance, and then, on this basis, testing out the implications both in understanding and helping individual children and in the planning of everyday procedures in the nursery school.

In offering the material in these studies, I am fully aware that my "interpretations" may be open to challenge; yet, at the same time, because, during the course of the past twenty-five years since the first investigation was initiated, such interpretations have repeatedly been put to the test in practical situations in the daily life in school, in particular, in helping teachers to deal with children in difficulty, it seemed worth while to make the findings available in the hope that they might offer some pointers to those working with children in school or engaged in similar studies.

In the present work, while it has been the study of the child's immediate relationships with other children in the nursery school with which I have been primarily concerned, I have followed this up by an attempt to become aware of the significance of his behaviour as observed in the nursery school, and of the influence of family relationships upon him, and thus to understand some of the ways by which he orientates himself to the influences impinging upon him.





## CHAPTER ONE

### SOME GENERAL TRENDS IN SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

In studying the impact upon young children of their introduction to group life in the nursery school, I found my initial inspiration in two important researches which had recently become available. The investigation by Professor Bridges into the social and emotional development of the pre-school child (1931)<sup>1</sup> provided the basis upon which I first endeavoured, by means of observation of children in Nursery School A, to establish the pattern of social development typical of these children, within their particular setting of neighbourhood, home and school. The second investigation which, I found, illuminated so much of what had previously puzzled me in the social and emotional behaviour of young children, was Dr. Susan Isaacs' work on social development in young children (1933).<sup>2</sup> It was this work which helped me to gain increasing awareness of the significance of children's behaviour.

#### THE SETTINGS IN WHICH THE INVESTIGATIONS WERE CARRIED OUT

Most of the material for these investigations has been drawn from my observations carried out in Nursery School A in 1933 and 1937, and from supplementary material from more recent observations in Nursery School B (1944 to 1956). In addition, there is a certain amount of random evidence from other schools in which an experimental approach in dealing with children's difficulties was adopted by students and teachers in their daily experience with children in school.

#### *Nursery School A*

This school was in a very poor district; it was a bungalow type of building with a large garden, occupying a site at the back of a block of tenements. There were sixty children in the school between the ages of 2 and 5 years, the majority coming from homes of two rooms and belonging to families in which the numbers of children

<sup>1</sup> Katharine M. B. Bridges: *Social and Emotional Development of the Pre-school Child*, Kegan Paul, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Isaacs: *Social Development in Young Children*, Routledge, 1933.



varied from two to six. Most of the fathers were unskilled workers; of these, only a small number was employed full-time. The children in the school were divided into two age-groups, with an average of about thirty children in each, one group ranging in age from 2 to 4 years, the other from 3½ to 5 years. Most of my observations were made in the 2- to 4-year-old group; of these children, nine had been newly admitted, fourteen had been in the school for one term, and the remainder for two terms or more.

The permanent staff included a Superintendent, two teachers and two nursery helpers. Each group of children was in the charge of one teacher, and the Superintendent planned her time so as to be able to spend some part of the day in each room. The nursery helpers worked alternately in the kitchen and in the room for the younger children. In addition to the permanent staff there were often students practising in the school; voluntary workers also came on certain days.

The school day was planned with the minimum of routine, thus allowing for long periods of free activity lasting from 8.30 a.m., when the children began to arrive, until 10.30 a.m., and continuing again in the afternoon. A large variety of play equipment was available at these times from which the children were free to choose their own toys and occupations, to use them in their own way, and to play in or out of doors as they wished when the weather was suitable. The only interruptions during the morning period of free play were for a drink of milk on or soon after arrival, and for the daily inspection by the nurse. After this free play period, the children were gathered together to sing nursery rhymes and to take part in singing games; this group time was followed by another play period when various kinds of "sense-training" apparatus were available for the children's use; such material consisted mainly of exercises in the discrimination of colour, size and shape. Bathroom routines in preparation for dinner ended the morning; some of the children who were chosen as "servers" helped to lay the tables and to serve the meal to the other children. An afternoon rest followed the meal, after which the children were free to play until tea-time when there might be another period of singing before the children had their afternoon snack. The school day ended between 4.0 p.m., and 4.30 p.m.

As this group was so large and the children were so young, considerable demands were made upon the teacher and her helper and it was sometimes difficult for them to be available to give time and attention to children who were in special need of help. Thus, although as an observer it was necessary for me to avoid, as far as



possible, coming into active contact with the children, there were occasions when it became necessary for me to adopt a more active rôle.

The records which formed the basis of this investigation were as follows:

- (a) general cross-section studies of the social contacts made by these children of 2 to 4 years during their first months in the school;
- (b) short biographical studies of individual children;
- (c) studies of individual and group hostility and aggression and of friendliness and co-operation and of the situations in which these forms of behaviour occurred;
- (d) studies of individual and group relationships in connection with the use of toys and play materials.

Since these were, in the main, cross-section studies of only the younger children in school A, they have been supplemented by some of the more comprehensive long-term studies of older children made by the staff and Head-teacher of school B.

### *Nursery School B*

This nursery school was housed in an old two-storeyed school building, the ground floor of which had been reconditioned and adapted to make it suitable for use as a nursery school for approximately forty-six children. The area which it served was, in the main, a poor one; streets were drab, and most of the houses old, some of them condemned as unfit for human habitation.

In a survey made by the Head-teacher at the time when some of the children were being studied, it was found that half of the families were living in two rooms, the number of children in these families varying from one to five. Of the thirty-four families represented in the school, only ten had the use of a garden or yard. A small proportion of the families lived in basement rooms which were below the level of the street; a few lived in the residential area up on the hill.

Of the three rooms on the ground floor of the nursery school, one was used as a playroom for a group of 15 to 18 children of 2 to 3½ years of age, another accommodated 25 to 28 children of 3½ to 5 years of age; part of the third room provided additional playing space. Outside each playroom was a small playground and garden to which there was direct access.

The staff included the Head-teacher who was in charge of the older group of children, a trained nursery school teacher who was responsible for the younger group, three full-time nursery helpers, and two part-time helpers who, in alternate weeks, attended a training centre for the further education and vocational training of



nursery nurses. In addition to their work with the children, these helpers were responsible for various routine jobs such as dealing with the laundry, cleaning nursery equipment, and so on.

Flexibility in policy and planning was aimed at in this school so that adaptations could be easily made and the needs of individual children met. The daily programme allowed for long, uninterrupted periods of free play in or out of doors as the children wished. Play was not interrupted for the morning snack, which was provided in buffet fashion rather than as a set meal. Towards the end of the morning there was a gradual clearing away of toys and play materials with which the children helped, and the preparation of the room for dinner while children went in turn to the bathroom to wash. A short group-time for those who wished to listen to stories, or to sing nursery rhymes, or to dance, preceded the midday meal. A period of rest followed the meal, after which the children played freely until the tea snack, which was usually preceded or followed by another group-time. The school day ended at 3.45 p.m.

Play activities were varied, and included, besides the usual toys and play equipment, materials for experimental, creative and constructive use, for the development of ideas in dramatic play, and for a growing appreciation of music, both by participation in group times and by individual experiment with a variety of percussion and other instruments and with the piano in the music corner.

The records of the children in school B were of two kinds—those kept by the teachers in the course of their daily work, and consisting of jottings which formed the basis for the cumulative records of individual children, written up daily, or at weekly or monthly intervals, and those kept by the Head-teacher consisting of more detailed studies of individual children. The Head-teacher's records were mainly of two kinds: those carried out in order to achieve a better understanding of difficult children and continued throughout the period during which these children were attending the school, and those carried out for shorter periods, recording the development of the group interests and activities in which several children were involved; these were invaluable for the study of group relationships among the older children in the nursery school.

In school B, with its smaller number of children and its larger number of staff, it was possible for the teachers to be available to help individuals and groups; this was of special importance in this school where the Head-teacher was exploring, in experimental ways, the function of the teacher in meeting the social and intellectual needs of the children.

Each of these two schools in its own way was doing pioneer work.



The organisation in both was fairly flexible, but there was a sufficiently solid framework of routines to make the children feel secure in their knowledge of the sequence of events during the day. In both schools it was recognised that discoveries made by the children themselves were of far more importance than information supplied verbally by the teacher. The children were given freedom to make discoveries through their own experimenting in the social field as well as in their experimenting with materials. At the same time, particularly in school B, the adults supported the positive rather than the negative forms of experimenting and helped the children to solve problems in social relationships which might otherwise have proved too frustrating for them, just as they did in connection with the children's experiments with materials.

*The approach to the study of social relationships in young children*

In my initial exploration of the field of social relationships in school A, I recorded as many different varieties of behaviour as the circumstances allowed and then considered them in relation to the situations in which such behaviour occurred and in relation to their developmental significance.

It is not possible in this monograph to present all the material which was collected in 1933.<sup>1</sup> The method I am adopting, therefore, is to sum up the characteristics typical of these children of 2 to 4 years of age, and to illustrate by extracts from the records. In order to do this, I first studied the records for evidence of the children's growing awareness of others and then arranged them to show this growth.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS TYPICAL OF THE CHILDREN OF 2 TO 4 YEARS OF AGE IN NURSERY SCHOOL A

*1. General indications of indifference, defensiveness, avoidance and withdrawal in 2-year-old children and in children newly admitted to the group*

In school A, where there was a large proportion of very young children, behaviour indicative of indifference, or of wary defensive watching, of avoidance or of withdrawal, seemed to be fairly typical of some of the youngest children and of those new to the school, in particular in situations in which they became involved in contacts with other children. Such reactions to the experience of entering the nursery school group might last for only a short time, or they might

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished thesis (1934), Department of Child Development, University of London Institute of Education.



indicate a prevailing attitude persisting for days or even weeks. Some children in whom this attitude persisted were likely to cry at intervals, or to sit despondently, almost entirely indifferent to all that was going on around, and if a spark of interest was aroused and the child began to watch the other children, he usually did so in a defensive manner. Friendly approaches made by other children appeared to be regarded by some of these younger children as potential threats or attacks and were usually reacted to passively or by a shrinking away in order to avoid contact. Interest in the toys in the nursery had not yet been sufficiently aroused, nor had these children achieved enough independence to be able to find occupation for themselves; should a toy be invitingly near, a child might pick it up and sit playing with it in a desultory manner, or he might accept a toy proffered by an adult, and, with her encouragement, be persuaded to play with it. Usually, however, his interest in the toy was not sufficiently strong to give him the proprietary interest in it which would make him actively defend his right to it if the toy were claimed by another child. If he did experience such interference, he tended to follow the line of least resistance and to give up the toy. He might appear to be quite passive over this or perhaps a trifle surprised; if, however, he was frightened by what seemed to him to be a sudden threat or attack, he was likely to begin to cry, since by this means he could compel an adult to give him help or attention; he might, however, show his submission to such "attack" in a slightly more independent mode of defence, e.g., by moving away from the vicinity of the approaching or threatening child.

In the examples which follow, the children had either just been admitted to the nursery school or were in their first term there.

*Jessica*, 2:6. (Newly admitted.)

October 12. *Jessica* sat or stood wherever the adult placed her; she was indifferent to her surroundings and showed no interest in other children.

October 17. She stood defensively watching the other children; once she touched a brick with her foot.

April 12. *Jessica* (3:0) cried when *Ada* (2:2) took her rusk at dinner-time.

*Cecil*, 2:2. (Newly admitted.)

April 12. *Cecil* was sitting in a corner crying; he followed the adult when she spoke to him.

April 18. He ran away from the table at dinner-time; he cried on being brought back and began sucking his thumb.



June 19. He shrank back when Daniel (3:0) threw some sand down his neck and when this happened again he withdrew to the other side of the sand-pit.

*Ada*, 2:1. (Newly admitted.)

March 20. Ada was sitting playing with her chair when Derrick (4:0) pushed her; she immediately began to cry.

April 18. Ada (2:2) was sitting in the rocking boat; she was frightened and ran away when Janet (3:7) came to share the rocking-boat with her.

*Danny*, 2:0. (Newly admitted.)

April 18. Danny, who had been sitting alone in the rocking-boat, withdrew into a corner when Jess (2:4) began tipping up the rocking-boat in order to get it for herself.

*Len*, 2:4. (Readmitted after the Christmas holiday.)

January 9. Len cried miserably and followed the adult, wanting to be carried. The teacher picked him up and held him for a time; he cried again on being put down, and held out his arms appealingly. She picked him up again and for a time he sat on her lap, sucking his thumb. He cried again later when she put him on a chair and left him, then sat there sucking his thumb and watching the other children.

*Eric*, 3:2. (Newly admitted.)

June 13. Eric was holding a pram when Lena (3:7) suddenly took it from him; he made no attempt to keep the pram, merely watching her as she wheeled it away. He seemed surprised at the attack.

## 2. *Awakening interest in toys and children*

The defensive watching of a child sometimes passed over into friendly watching when sufficient interest was aroused to command his whole attention. Sometimes this interest took the form of a "sampling" of the toys and materials in the nursery, sometimes it was shown in the way a child wandered about the room in order to observe more closely. During his wandering he would pick up toys and investigate them, play with them for a few moments, or throw them away; he might try out various activities perhaps only momentarily, perhaps for longer periods; sometimes this "trying out" of some activity would take place beside another child, and momentary social contact would be made.

The following records show that this awakening interest in toys



and children, often giving rise to activity of an exploratory nature, was seen in children who at the same time were watching other children in a defensive way.

*Jessica, 2:6.*

October 18. Jessica played with her chair, climbing on it and lifting it; later she picked up a doll which was lying near, looked at it, smacked it, cuddled it, and dressed it in her handkerchief, putting its arms through holes in the handkerchief.

October 19. For more than an hour Jessica sat in her chair watching the other children playing, then she picked up a toy lamb and played with it. She later watched with interest when Janet and Marjorie (twins, 3:1) were putting a doll into the pram, and when for a moment the pram was left unattended she touched it with her finger and made it move.

November 8. Jessica (2:7) watched Len (2:2) joining up the wooden train, then sat beside him on the floor and fitted the pieces together with him.

April 17. Jessica (3:0) sat on the floor pretending to wash her Teddy bear, then she put it in a box and covered it with a blanket.

*Cecil, 2:2.*

April 12. Cecil had been looking at a book with an adult who was holding him on her knee. Suddenly he jumped down and went over to watch some children who were using the "tap-tap" mosaics. He picked up one of the mosaics and fitted a nail through the hole in the centre.

*Ada, 2:1.*

March 20. Ada played with her chair after having her milk, then went to the mat and sat there playing with a wooden train. She moved a pram which had been left near her, watched a child with a horse, got a horse for herself and wheeled it to the mat, then found another horse and tried to push both. She watched Jessica (2:11) putting a doll to bed, then picked up a blanket and laid it on the doll's bed; she then went back to her horse and played alone.

*Eric, 3:0.*

April 16. This was Eric's first week in the school and he had played very little; when the other children went into the garden on this day, and he was left alone in the playroom, he reached out for a horse and stood holding it.



*Jonathan*, 3:1. (Newly admitted.)

April 16. Jonathan accepted a truck from an adult as he stood watching the other children; he walked up and down with it.

### 3. *Active reaction to interference*

When children began to take a proprietary interest in certain toys and occupations, having perhaps chosen them for several days in succession, the attempts of other children to interrupt their play, to coerce them, or to take their toys, would cause them to protest as they relinquished the toy or sought to protect themselves. Even though this protest might be nothing more than a shout or a weak threat shown by the raising of a hand as if to strike, it suggested the emergence of a sense of ownership, and a dawning appreciation of other children as entities who would have to be reckoned with. Sometimes, after making such a protest, the child found it necessary to withdraw from the threatening or interfering child, since the latter was often bigger and stronger.

Similarly, when a child had had some experience of making momentary contact with other children, he might become sufficiently sure of himself not to give up his toy immediately on demand, but to assume a defensively hostile attitude to such interference, or to the sundry attentions which might be forced upon him. This attitude might find expression in hostile shouts and screams, or be conveyed by voice or manner or by verbal protests or withdrawal.

*Jessica*, 2:6.

October 19. Jessica submitted protestingly when Dora (3:7) tried to make her get into a bed. On the same day, when she was playing with some bricks, she reacted by pulling the bricks away when Jonathan (2:7) tried to get them from her.

October 26. Jessica was playing with a toy dog, pretending to put it to bed; she made only a slight protest when a blanket was taken from her.

January 10. Jessica (2:9) gave up the ball with which she had been playing when Lionel (2:7) seized it. They looked fixedly at each other for a moment, then as Lionel threw the ball Jessica ran for it, but before she could get it Lionel shouted so threateningly that Jessica began to cry and made no further attempts to play with it.

April 19. Jessica (3:0) ran away, frightened and protesting, when Nelly (3:8) tried to wipe her nose for her.

*Ada*, 2:2.

April 11. Ada, who had been playing at "bathing" her doll, pulled



the doll away protestingly when Janet (3:7) came up and tried to join in her game. Later, after having been given the hammer pegs by Lionel (2:10), she raised her hammer threateningly when Joan approached the table.

*Jess, 2:4.*

April 19. Jess was playing with the hammer pegs when June (3:3) came and watched her and told her to hurry up. Jess seemed to resent this and eventually picked up the hammer pegs and carried them to another corner.

*Lionel, 2:4.*

October 4. Lionel, playing with a picture-matching board, screamed at another child's approach; a little later, when another child came to his table to use another puzzle which was lying there, Lionel screamed and banged his board threateningly. On the same day, he stood against the wall screaming loudly when Derrick (3:7) rode his tricycle towards him. A little later when Derrick pushed his tricycle up the step and into the corner where Lionel was standing, Lionel screamed and stamped his feet.

April 11. Lionel (2:10) was playing with a ball when George (3:8) tried to get it away from him. When, on a second attempt, George succeeded in getting the ball, Lionel shouted and cried.

June 6. Lionel (3:0) was busy filling a small pail with sand, and when Cecil (2:4) walked off with the big pail with which Lionel had previously been playing, Lionel reacted by screaming and stamping his feet.

*Jenny, 2:2.*

June 19. Jenny shrank away when Ivy (3:10) approached and tried to hold her hand in order to put her into the chair beside her. Jenny stepped backwards, pulling away her hand and protesting.

Instead of a hostile protest or a defensive withdrawal, some children showed enough independence to be able to find substitutes if other children had taken away the toys with which they had been playing.

*Ruth, 2:2.*

October 4. Ruth was wheeling a pram around the room when George (3:2) came up and took it from her; she at once found another and wheeled it into the garden. On the next day, she was again playing with the pram, when Dora (3:7) took it from her; Ruth gave up the pram, then found a cart and played with it.



*Jess, 2:4.*

April 18. Jess was playing with the pram, but gave it up and found another toy when Ethel (3:4) approached to play with her.

*4. Solitary play in which new skills were acquired and real achievements enjoyed*

It was obvious, as one observed the children, that much of the apparatus in the nursery school presented to the children new and fascinating possibilities and opened up problems inviting experiment. Some of the children showed great persistence and independence and expended much effort in solving the problems they discovered. The sense of achievement gained through such "problem-solving", and through the acquisition of such skills as riding the tricycle, rocking on the horse, climbing the Jungle Gym, manipulating clay or plasticine, or building with bricks, was clearly of great importance to the children.

*Len, 2:1.*

October 4. Len stood by the rocking-horse and indicated by noises and gestures that he wanted to be lifted on to its back. When this had been done, he sat quite still for two or three minutes till a chance movement of his body caused a corresponding movement in the horse. After this he experimented for a long time in all kinds of ways, moving his head, wriggling his body, and waving his arms, and although some of his movements resulted in some movement in the horse, he did not seem to discover the correct movements to make in order to be sure of rocking the horse. He rested for a time, then tried again, this time kicking his legs, sitting without holding, then lifting his legs. Finally, after making an effort to get off by himself, he shouted loudly, "Di da, di da!" and was lifted down. A week later, he came to the rocking-horse and made a gesture asking for help. As his appeal was not noticed he tried to climb up on the horse; finding this impossible, he pulled a chair near, climbed on the chair and tried to get on to the horse, but only succeeded in pushing it.

A few days later Len was playing with a large round tin box, trying to roll it across the floor. He became fairly expert in doing this. Then he found the lid of the box and tried various ways of fitting it on. He spent a long time over this and when he eventually succeeded he laughed and looked round for approval. Later in the morning he spent a long time trying to lift a wooden horse on to the table; several times he almost succeeded but as the horse was heavy it slid off nearly every time, sometimes knocking him over. Nevertheless, he finally succeeded not only in getting the horse on to the



table but also in climbing up beside it, but in the moment of success he knocked the horse so that it fell on to the floor and in trying to catch it he also fell.

*Cecil, 2:4.*

June 7. Cecil took the big tricycle and began to experiment with it, first turning the handles and trying to move the tricycle, then climbing on to the seat and trying to get his feet on to the pedals. Finally he managed to ride a little way across the playground with his feet on the pedals.

*Terry, 3:0.*

May 11. Terry pushed a wooden horse up to the top of the slide, then, unable to keep a firm foothold, he called out, "Hold this, Peggy; hold this, Peggy!" Peggy (2:5), however, ignored his request, so he slid down the slide, ran round quickly and lifted the horse down without help.

*Jenny, 2:2.*

June 8. Jenny sat at the bottom of the steep slide in the playground and it seemed as if she might be going to attempt to climb up. Seeing other children sliding down, she walked round to the steps, and with the adult's encouragement, ventured to climb up the steps by herself; she got over the top successfully and slid down slowly, holding the sides. She returned for another turn and laughed when the adult pushed her so that she slid down quickly.

Sometimes the satisfaction derived from play with toys came from the working out of ideas in solitary imaginative play or dramatic play.

*Jessica, 3:0.*

April 17. Jessica sat on the floor pretending to wash her Teddy bear; then she put it to bed in a box and covered it with a blanket.

*Joan, 2:4.*

June 5. Joan made a bed by putting two chairs together, she put her doll into the bed, covered it, then sat on a horse beside the bed, patting the doll; finally she got into bed beside the doll. A day or two later, she found a pram for her Teddy bear, then took a cup from the dresser, fed the Teddy bear, then replaced the cup on the hook. She tucked up her Teddy bear more satisfactorily and wheeled the pram away. A little later she took the bear out of the pram, carried it over to the Jungle Gym where an impromptu swing had been



fixed, and tried to swing the bear. Not finding this very successful, she placed the bear on a tricycle and gave it a ride.

*George, 3:3.*

November 1. George placed some chairs in a long line and sat on the end chair making car noises and pretending to drive. Then he got more chairs from the table and made a very long "bus".

*Nesta, 3:7.*

November 1. Nesta picked up a doll in her mouth and crawled about the floor pretending that she was a dog. Then she made a little house with chairs, and sat inside and played with the tea-set. On the following day, she took a small stool away from Jessica, placed a pillow on the stool, then tried to curl up on the pillow as if she were in bed. Later, seeing the large wooden blocks on a table, she made a small space in the middle of them, then clambered up and sat cross-legged in the small space between the blocks.

#### *5. A growing readiness to approach or to respond to other children*

An awakening interest in other children and growing confidence in approaching them was seen in the various attempts made by individuals to join in play with another child, and by the acceptance of another child's offer to share a toy. Such approaches and responses sometimes resulted in short periods of social play. However short the duration of these contacts, the children seemed to derive from them sufficient satisfaction to make them want to go further in establishing social relations with other children. Sometimes the younger child's approach to the older one would be that of following, of obeying requests and commands in a blind fashion, or of submitting to another child's domination.

*Lionel, 2:4.*

October 4. Lionel was sitting at a table beside Len (2:1) playing with a little basket. Presently he got up, gave his basket to two girls who were playing nearby, stepped over a pile of bricks and went out into the garden. Later he approached a little girl who was hanging some toy cups on the dresser; he joined in her play, shouting "Look, look!" as he took all the cups and put them into a box and rattled them. Suddenly he saw the little basket and a wheel with which he had previously been playing; he played with these for a little while and with a doll's chair, then he played again with the cups in the box.

On the following day he was playing with a tea-set beside



Godfrey (2:6). He "poured tea" into a cup, watched Godfrey offer a "cup of tea" to an adult and offered his cup to a boy who was watching. He poured another cup and took it to the table where some of the bigger boys were playing, then he approached Derrick (3:7) who was playing with a toy donkey, and tried to cuddle him, but did not succeed in getting the donkey. He then watched a little girl putting a doll into a pram.

*Ada*, 2:3, and *Godfrey*, 3:1.

May 9. Ada was watching Godfrey's play with the dolls' tea-set and was also playing with some of the cups and saucers. When Ada reached out for a jug she wanted, Godfrey remonstrated and took it away. Ada gave it up and went on playing happily with her cups and saucers.

*Jessica*, 2:6, and *Tom*, 2:8.

October 25. Jessica was standing by the cupboard with a doll in her arms; she watched Tom when he came up to her and replied to something he said, then waved to him, as he wheeled his horse away waving his hand to her as he went. He came back bringing a pillow for her doll and she nodded and pointed as he gave it to her. She laughed when he ran up and hit her playfully.

*Danny*, 2:0.

April 11. Danny followed George (3:8) and stood watching him when he became absorbed in any occupation. A few days later he passively complied when George indicated that he should push his car along; George did not even bother to pedal, making Danny do all the work.

*Eric*, 3:1.

May 11. Eric had been following Harold (3:8) for some time. When Harold got into the motor, Eric, in response to Harold's command, pushed the motor along and did his best to comply when Harold urged, "Faster, faster!"

June 19. Eric (3:2) was told by Harold to sit on the back of his bike. They had not gone far before Harold pushed him off, shouting "No!" Eric submitted passively and followed Harold as he rode around the playground; he was then given a place on another boy's bike but was pushed off almost immediately. Harold shouted, "Go on Lionel's car," and Eric tried to do this but was pushed away by Lionel (2:11). Harold rode his bike into the playroom, then shouted, "Erry, come in here, come in here." Eric followed him into the playroom and submitted to being lifted on to the bike.



*Len*, 2:1, and *June*, 2:9.

October 12. *Len* passively tolerated *June's* rough embraces, allowing himself to be put into the doll's pram and pushed about in it, and submitting to *June's* petting which took the form of patting his face and ruffling his hair. He made no protest when *June* took some of his food at dinner-time, nor when she kicked his foot under the table.

*Ada*, 2:4.

June 19. *Ada* was pulled along by *Nelly* (3:10) who ran so quickly that *Ada* stumbled and nearly fell. *Ada* was barefooted, but *Nelly* took no account of this, nor of the fact that she was much smaller than herself and could not run as fast. *Ada* was pulled to a corner of the garden and was made by *Nelly* to lie down on the ground; she submitted to this and to *Nelly's* solicitous patting and to her occasional smacks and pushes when she made any attempt to move.

It seemed that these very young children, when complying with another child's commands, did not always enjoy the rôles assigned to them. When required by a bigger child to get into a pram or cradle, the smaller child sometimes had to tolerate a good deal of rather forcible attention. The smaller child did not always seem to realise that he was playing a part for the older child; while being aware of the apparent friendly feeling directed towards him, he seemed at the same time to sense an element of hostility in the attention he was receiving. The conflicting attitudes of the older children appeared to puzzle the smaller children, whose experience of group life was not sufficient for them to decide how best to react, hence their usual reaction was to tolerate the forcible attention or to seek to escape from it.

It sometimes happened that children who had found enjoyment in carrying out such passive rôles would take steps to draw attention to themselves, wanting again to have the satisfaction of sharing some of the favourite toys or of receiving another child's attention. If a child was not very sure of himself, his attempts to get others to let him join in their play sometimes took the form of intense watching, of standing near and following, of placing himself invitingly before the child who was taking the lead in the game. If he was more confident, his attempts were more direct and adventurous, taking the form of approaching a child who was actively engaged in an activity and trying to share in it with him. This sometimes seemed to be done by a child not only with a view to being allowed to share in the activity, but as an attempt to find out with what kind of reaction his approach would meet. This experi-



menting in social approach with the intention of evoking a response in another child might take the form of what appeared to be a mild form of hostility, e.g., taking a toy which had just been left by another child, or trying to get a toy already in another child's possession. The child who was thus experimenting might want the toy, but at the same time he seemed to want to evoke some response in another child.

*Ada, 2:2.*

April 12. Ada snatched away the book at which Robbie (3:1) was looking. She kept a firm hold of it and stared at him as he protested threateningly and appealed to others for help. Eventually they both looked at the book together.

*Cecil, 2:4, and Harold, 3:9.*

June 12. Cecil, seeing Harold's high tower of bricks, suddenly ran up and pushed the tower over. He ran away quickly when Harold threatened him.

*Marjorie, 3:7, June, 3:3, and Lena, 3:5.*

April 11. Marjorie watched June lifting Lena, then came and stood in front of June, drawing attention to herself as if she, too, would like to be lifted.

*Lena, 3:5, Ethel, 3:4, and June, 3:3.*

April 17. Lena and Ethel were in the rocking-boat; June came and watched, then took hold of the boat and helped to swing it up and down. Later she stood watching while Lena and Ethel played roughly with each other while rocking, pulling each other's hair and tickling each other. While they were doing this, June came close to the rocking-boat, touched Ethel and pointed to herself, in an attempt to make Ethel pay attention to her.

*Kitty, 2:6, Ruth, 2:10, and Janet, 3:9.*

June 12. Kitty, wanting to share the rocking boat, ran up and sat in one of the empty seats when Ruth was inviting Janet to share it with her; Ruth went away from the rocking-boat when Kitty remained in the seat, and Kitty tried to use it by herself for a few moments.

6. *Experimental interference of an aggressive nature*

The success of mildly hostile attacks, leading to some dawning awareness on the part of the "attacker" of his sense of power over



others led, in some children, to more sustained interference, sometimes for the possession of a coveted toy, the ownership of which for the time being seemed to become almost of life and death importance. Sometimes it was only when a toy was seen in another child's possession that it was endowed with such value by the attacking child that it became imperative for him to possess it. Sometimes a great deal of persistence would be shown in the efforts to get the toy, sometimes possession was attempted by sudden attack. Much of this behaviour seemed to be of an experimental nature, particularly when former successes, having contributed to a child's realisation of his sense of power, caused him to try out his power in these ways.

*June*, 2:9, and *Len*, 2:1.

October 12. June, seeing Len pushing the rocking-horse, suddenly took possession of the horse by pushing Len away. Len screamed for a few moments then began playing with a wheelbarrow. June followed him and seized the wheelbarrow, and again Len screamed and stamped his feet. Derrick (3:7) came to Len's aid, took the wheelbarrow from June and gave it back to Len. June then began to stamp her feet and to cry loudly.

*Kitty*, 2:4, and *Nelly*, 3:8.

April 17. Kitty persistently followed Nelly and tried to get the pram away from her. Nelly found a toy animal and gave it to Kitty, then quickly seized the pram and pushed it away, leaving Kitty screaming.

*Len*, 2:7, and *Ada*, 2:2.

April 18. Len, seeing Ada playing with the horse on wheels, followed her and tried to get the horse by reaching for it. Ada pushed Len away and tried to pull the horse away quickly. Len then seized the horse and there was a long struggle in which both pulled at the horse. An adult eventually intervened.

*Len*, 2:9, and *Danny*, 2:2.

June 7. Len had been playing happily with a small engine when he wandered off for a moment to join in another boy's game, then, seeing Danny playing with the engine, he shouted aggressively and seized Danny until he gave up the engine. Eric (3:2) then picked it up to play with it, but put it down quickly when Len shouted at him.

*Tom*, 2:8, and *Len*, 2:1.

October 18. Tom followed Len who was on the tricycle, pulled



him off, and got on and tried to ride away. Len smacked and pushed him, and stamped and cried. Tom gave up the tricycle and then, by shouting and stamping, succeeded in taking away the tricycle on which Nesta (3:6) was riding.

*June, 3:3, Janet and Marjorie, 3:7 (twins).*

April 12. June snatched one of the covers from Janet's pram and then waited to see what would happen. Janet immediately snatched it back. June then snatched Marjorie's cover, but threw it away when Marjorie began to smack her.

*Joan, 2:4, and Kitty, 2:5.*

June 8. Joan was putting her dolls to bed in the big cradle. Looking round for another blanket and seeing Kitty covering her dolls in the pram, she quickly seized one of Kitty's blankets. Kitty immediately hit out at Joan and followed her when she ran away with the blanket.

*Len, 2:2.*

November 11. Len, seeing Ruth (2:3) pushing a toy frog in a pram, suddenly snatched at the pram. Ruth smacked and pushed so violently that Len fell over a horse and began to cry. At this, Ruth looked concerned, helped him to get up, patted him and gave him the horse.

*Ethel, 3:6.*

June 15. Ethel came to the rocking-boat which was being used by Nelly (3:10) and May (3:8), and tried to get a place in it by hitting May and pulling her. May cried and turned her face away but would not yield; then Ethel put her arms round May saying, "I won't do it if you get out." As this proved unsuccessful, she said very aggressively, two or three times, "Get out! Get out!" This also was of no avail and Ethel stood looking at May as if wondering how best to get her out of the rocking-boat. Eventually she went away.

#### *7. Active retaliation following interference*

When the sense of ownership had become very important to a child, anger was aroused quickly if the toy was snatched, or if another child tried to join in play with the toy. Retaliation took various forms in this group of children; sometimes it was by an immediate attack, by smacking and kicking, and by pulling hair; sometimes a toy might be used as a weapon; occasionally another child was persuaded to mete out punishment, and on one occasion I saw a boy



seize one of the twins and attempt to use her arm as a weapon. Aggressive attempts to regain the toy, by persistently clinging to the toy and attempting to pull it away, were the methods used by other children.

If a child was not sure enough of himself to stand up to his adversary, the pent-up feelings were sometimes vented upon another child, a sudden violent push, smacking, spoiling what a child was doing, or depriving him of his toy being some of the ways by which a child might express his frustration and annoyance.

*Terry, 3:1.*

June 13. Terry, trying to keep exclusive possession of a small toy motor car, ran quickly into a corner when Len (2:9) came and seized the car. He was forced to give it up when Len pulled his hair. In anger, he turned on Jenny (2:2) and pulled her hair. Later he managed to get the car again and was watching the wheels go round when June (3:5) came up and seized it. Terry hid his face in his hands for a moment, then he picked up a chair, lifted it on to a stool, and pushed it violently so that it fell.

*Cecil, 2:3.*

May 15. Cecil, wanting to join George (3:9) who was sitting in a box, was repulsed by George. Cecil then went to a bigger boy on a bike and pointed to George as if asking him to punish George.

June 19. Cecil (2:4) followed George (3:10), who was riding his bike round the garden. Suddenly Cecil tried to gain possession by pulling at the bike. George hit Cecil and clung to the bike; Cecil retaliated by pulling George's hair; George hit back, then rode off looking sulky and cross when an adult intervened.

*Godfrey, 3:1, and Ruth, 2:9.*

May 25: Godfrey, resenting Ruth's teasing when she put her foot on his chair, raised his hand threateningly and said "Don't!" then smacked Danny (2:1) who was standing near.

*Nelly, 3:8.*

April 17. Nelly, having been worried by Len (2:7) who persistently tried to get her pram, suddenly knocked over the tall tower which had been built by Joan.

April 17. Jessica reacted to Nelly's forcible attempts to wipe her  
*Jessica, 3:0, and Nelly, 3:8.*



nose, first by seizing Kitty's pram, then by snatching a Teddy bear and smacking it.

*Sidney*, 3:9.

May 7. Sidney was playing with the big car when Harold (3:8) seized it. Sidney unsuccessfully tried to keep possession of it by hitting and pushing Harold, then suddenly turned upon another child and tried to get his bike.

*June*, 2:9, and *Betty*, 3:6.

October 19. June and Betty were playing together with the Montessori insets, exchanging them with each other and throwing them. Betty was hit by one of the insets, and suddenly, becoming cross, leaned over and pinched June, who also retaliated by pinching. Then they hit each other, and after a few moments of this they searched their arms to find the marks made by the pinches and showed them to each other, nodding their heads accusingly.

#### 8. *Experimenting in social relationships in aggressive play*

The records of three-year-old children suggest that much social experimenting takes place in aggressive play, the emphasis being on *playful* rather than on serious aggression. Much of this kind of play among these three-year-olds was reciprocal, and seemed to afford considerable enjoyment to the small groups of children engaged in it. The playful element was usually maintained until one of the children became hurt or frightened, when the aggression might become real and serious, or, on the other hand, signs of remorse and sympathy and of a desire to help might be seen, together with an attempt to win back the injured or frightened child's friendliness.

There was a much stronger element of social awareness in this play, occurring because of the "ganging-up" of small groups of children; any group thus formed might be held together loosely by a friendly rivalry between the members in the group. When, however, the group was threatened by an "outsider", it seemed to become much more closely knit, since any feelings of hostility and rivalry were turned towards the one who was threatening the group. In the same way, if a child looked upon another child as his special friend, he was likely to resent the feeling of being "shut out" if his friend seemed, even temporarily, to "belong" to another child.

The growing ability of a child to maintain an attitude of friendliness among a few children united by a common feeling, while at



the same time showing hostility to any child who might try to enter the group or to break it up, represents a considerable advance in social relations. It is evidence of the emergence in the child of his capacity, at this stage, to be friendly towards and to co-operate with an ally, and to be aggressive and hostile towards the "common enemy", and thus to experience two very different kinds of feelings at one and the same time. Anger might then be aroused in a child, not merely on his own behalf, but on behalf of a playmate or workmate, sometimes leading to a hostile attack in defence of his friend.

Some rudimentary element of leadership seemed to enter into these emerging group relations, e.g., one child might take the lead in actively initiating hostility towards an "outsider"; he might be sufficiently aware of his power over others to find ways of swaying them, by inciting them to disorderly behaviour, by persuading others to carry out his wishes. Conversely, there were children who were prepared to follow the lead of the most influential members of the group. It seemed that, for a child who had not the initiative to create disorder or to be actively hostile, the imitation of and co-operation with another in such behaviour might be a way of boosting his own desire for power. Similarly, in accepting another child's leadership, he might feel strong enough to show hostility to an "outsider" at the leader's instigation.

*Marjorie*, 3:7, *Ethel*, 3:4, and *Lena*, 3:5.

April 16. *Marjorie*, in immediate retaliation after *Ethel's* interference in her game, suddenly began to smack her, then picked up a brick to hit her. At an adult's laughing remonstrance, they both laughed and threatened each other playfully with bricks, then played together for some time.

On the following day, *Ethel* and *Lena* (3:5) were playing in the rocking-boat. While they rocked, they became very excited, shouting at each other playfully, tickling each other and pulling each other's hair; this was accompanied by hilarious shouting and laughing.

June 6. *Lena* (3:7) was playing with a bicycle in the garden when she saw *June* (3:5) with a Teddy bear in her pram, sitting on the step beside *Ethel* (3:6) who was dressing a doll. *Lena* suddenly jumped off her bike and, running to *June*, pushed her away from *Ethel*, saying crossly, "Go 'way; go 'way by 'self!"

*Gordon*, 3:10, and *George*, 3:8.

April 12. *Gordon*, watching *George* who was standing on a table lowering chairs from the table to the floor, joined in the play and



took the chairs from George as he lowered them. Then George began pushing chairs so that they fell off the table; Gordon shouted at him, then laughed and helped to push the chairs more violently, kicking them as they were pushed down by George. When all the chairs were on the floor, George began to throw toys about the room, and Gordon ran round picking up toys and bringing them to George to be thrown down again.

*Sidney, 3:8, and Harold, 3:7.*

April 16. Sidney and Harold snatched the "tap-tap" mallets and board away from Ruth (2:8) and began to bang the board and the table noisily with their mallets. Kitty (2:4) came to the table and picked up a mallet as if to join in the fun; Harold threatened her and Sidney pretended to hammer her head. Kitty protested, wriggled away, and found another occupation for herself.

Later, on the same day, Sidney began to cry when George (3:8) interfered with him; Danny (2:0) came up, and, putting his arms round Sidney, tried to comfort him. Sidney, however, seeing Harold standing nearby, suddenly pushed Danny away and called out, "Kick him, Harold". Harold kicked George at Sidney's instigation and Danny also followed, trying to kick George as he ran to seek adult protection.

*Sidney, 3:10.*

June 12. Sidney, seeing Cecil (2:4) pulling Kitty's doll and trying to get it from her, hit Cecil, and diverted his attention so that Kitty was able to withdraw with her doll and find a seat at another table.

*George, 3:3.*

November 1. George showed great anxiety after hitting Keith (3:2) and making him cry. When Keith threatened, "I'll tell my Mummy of you," George put his arm round Keith's neck, saying, "I won't hit you again."

*Harold, 3:8, and Sidney, 3:9.*

May 9. Harold seized Sidney's spade, and Sidney took up a handful of sand and threw it at Harold. They attacked each other furiously for a few moments, then Harold became rather frightened and called out, "I won't throw no more at you, Sid." They then co-operated in throwing sand at the children outside the sand pit.

#### *9. Experimenting in friendly domination and leadership*

The experimental domination of other children by threats and



attacks seemed in some children to precede experiments in friendly domination; in other children both hostile and friendly methods of coercion were used at the same time. It was nevertheless apparent that there gradually emerged in the children the realisation that they could get their own way by friendly rather than hostile means. Where hostility and rivalry existed between two or more children, the hostility was sometimes successfully disguised by compromises, by bribes, or by appeals; in fact, this kind of experimenting was so general as to suggest that it was an important step towards true co-operation. Some children showed considerable ingenuity in getting a share in the use of a toy; sometimes they did it by successfully assuming leadership and allowing others to play a relatively small part in an activity. When their ownership of a toy or activity was challenged or threatened, some children found or suggested an alternative occupation for the children challenging their ownership, or in other ways diverted their attention away from themselves. Sometimes their domination of others who were willing to submit to such domination, when carried out in friendly ways, resulted in the establishment of friendly relations between two or more children.

*Janet, 3:4.*

January 10. Janet, wanting the horse with which Len (2:4) was playing, offered him another toy, which he accepted, and then took the horse from him in exchange.

*Nelly, 3:8.*

April 16. Nelly wanted to have the Teddy bear to put into her pram but not being successful she turned to Ruth (2:8) saying, "Will you sit in here?" then to Joan (2:2), "Will you?" As neither accepted her offer, she announced, "I want somebody to sit in my pram." May (3:6), who was playing with a waggon, gave this to Ethel and said to Nelly, "I'll be your baby," to which Nelly replied, "Yes, you be my baby; sit in."

*Ethel, 3:4.*

April 19. Ethel came up to May (3:6), who was putting her doll to bed in the cradle, and after watching her for a moment, bent down and said in a solicitous tone of voice, "Have you had your milk yet?" May, not deceived by this solicitude, very firmly said "Yes", and took her doll and cradle to another part of the room.

*Derrick, 4:2.*

May 11. Derrick was playing with the car when Jonathan (3:2),



who had been deprived of his bike by Godfrey (3:1), came up, and pointing to Derrick's car, said, "I want that motor." Derrick firmly replied "No!" Again Jonathan said more insistently, "I want that motor." Derrick then looked around, and seeing a bike nearby, offered it, saying, "Here, you have this." Jonathan replied, "All right," and accepted it.

*Godfrey, 3:3, and Nelly, 3:11.*

July 27. Godfrey, seeing Nelly playing with the spade he wanted, offered her a wooden spoon, saying, "You give me that and I'll give you this spoon." Nelly at first said "No", then she changed her mind, gave up the spade, and ran indoors saying, "I'll get another." A little later Gilbert (2:11) seized Godfrey's spade and Godfrey turned to Nelly again holding out his hand for her spade. Nelly shook her head saying, "There's another one indoors." After a short struggle, Godfrey gave up the spade which he had been trying to retrieve, and joined in the game using his hands to pat the sand.

*Ethel, 3:4.*

April 17. Ethel had been making a great fuss of Joan (2:2), stroking her hair and face, then she let Joan get into the rocking-boat with Lena (3:5) and helped them to swing for a few minutes. Presently she prevented them from swinging, saying, "Get out, Lena; I want to have a ride." She did not insist on this, however, when Lena refused to get out, but, finding some coloured bricks, offered them to Joan and Lena as if they were biscuits. They called out "Mummy, Mummy," and pretended to eat the biscuits.

*May, 3:7, and Nelly, 3:9.*

May 30. May helped Nelly to get into the pram and covered her up with a blanket; she gave her a doll, then pretended to feed her from an imaginary bottle, but Nelly shook her head violently, refusing to be fed. May looked at her, saying coaxingly, "Milk, milk, have you drank it all?" She then turned suddenly to a child who had come up and who was holding the handle of the pram, and said, "You leave my little baby alone!"

#### *10. Active response to friendly domination and leadership*

This active response differed from the passive submission to the coercion of older children which I had seen in very young children, in that it seemed to be indicative on the part of a child, of a readiness to accept subordinate or complementary rôles in a game in an active and friendly way. When a child actively wished to join



in a group game, he usually seemed willing to accept a subordinate rôle, happily fitting in with the demands of the leader. So also, if the game required two or more children for the working out of imaginative ideas, e.g., that of mother, father, or baby, the acceptance of one of these rôles by children willing to play these complementary parts was essential for satisfying play. The same applied in the use of equipment for which two or more children were needed in order to use it in the most satisfying way, e.g., rocking-boats, swings, see-saws.

*May*, 3:6, *Nelly*, 3:8, and *Kitty*, 2:4.

April 16. May was playing with a waggon and at the same time watching Nelly who was wheeling an empty pram. Hearing Nelly say, "I want somebody to sit in my pram," May gave her waggon to Ethel and said to Nelly, "I'll be your baby." Nelly replied, "Yes, you be my baby, sit in." May got into the pram and Nelly wheeled her across the playground, then left her for a moment while she ran off to get a blanket. Kitty ran up and, seizing the pram, tipped it over so that May fell out. Nelly returned just then and picked up the pram. May was going to hold the pram, but drew back when Nelly said, "Don't have to hold the handle." When Nelly had tucked up a doll in the pram, May and Danny (2:0) held the handle of the pram when they were told to do so by Nelly. As they walked off, Nelly said, "I'm the mother, ain't I?" May replied, "I want to be the baby."

*June*, 3:4, and *Lena*, 3:5.

May 31. June got into the pram at Lena's invitation, accepted the doll offered by Lena and a pillow for her head, and enjoyed the solicitude with which Lena tended her.

*Marjorie*, 3:7.

April 17. Marjorie wanted to have a turn on the bike with which Robbie (3:1) was playing, but not being successful, responded to his invitation to share the seat with him even though it was only the rear half that was offered.

## *II. Active co-operation and friendliness within the group*

When the children had begun to experience the satisfaction which could be derived from play in a group of two, three, or even more children, spontaneously formed in some kind of group activity, it was possible to see the emergence of real group feeling. Readiness to share and to take turns applied as much to the sharing of



important rôles as to the sharing of favourite toys. Attempts to control or correct another child were carried out in friendly rather than in aggressive ways; the friendliness which a child might feel towards others in play was carried over into situations which involved a certain amount of responsibility which he seemed to undertake spontaneously. When another child was in difficulties and needed help, he attempted to offer comfort and help in practical ways.

*June, 3:3, and May, 3:6.*

April 16. June and May were playing together with the car, May was pushing the car for June who was riding in it. Presently they changed places, May taking the seat, while June pushed the car for her.

*June, 3:5, and Ethel, 3:6.*

June 8. June and Ethel got into the rocking-boat together and rocked gently to and fro, singing a song they both knew, the rocking of the boat marking the rhythm of the song.

*Trix, 4:0.*

March 22. Trix went to Nesta (3:11), who was looking at a book, and invited her to play, saying, "Coming in my bed?" Nesta at first took no notice, but when Trix repeated the invitation again and again, she left her book and got into Trixie's "bed", which was a blanket spread out on the floor. A little later, when Trix went away, Nesta invited Don (2:5) to get under the blanket and treated him as a baby, patting and cuddling him. Nesta then went off to get a horse and waggon which she brought back for Don to hold, then again she sat beside him, patting him. When Trix returned, Nesta tucked her under the blanket with Don, wiped her eyes and nose and gave her a doll. Presently she went off to get another blanket with which to cover her two "babies", tucked it round them, and sat beside them, patting them. A little later she ran to Ellen and said to her, "Ellen, come and be my baby."

*Jeanette, 3:8, and Nesta, 3:7.*

November 2. Jeanette had made a little "house" of chairs inside which she had put a small stool covered with a cloth and on this she had put out the tea-set. Inside the "house" was a large cradle and one or two smaller cradles. Nesta brought her Teddy bear and push-cart to Jeanette's "house", said, "Knock, knock," banging on one of the chairs, and entered the "house", bringing the push-



cart with her. After talking together for a few moments, Jeanette ran outside the "house," then rushed back again, calling, "It's raining! It's raining!" Jeanette then put Nesta to bed in the big cradle and covered her up; she went to the stool, poured out "a cup of tea", and brought the cup and saucer on a tray to Nesta, who accepted them but asked for a table. Jeanette brought the table for her and placed the cup and saucer on it. Nesta pretended to eat her "supper", then asked for a pillow which Jeanette brought and placed under her head, then she took the Teddy bear offered by Jeanette, snuggled down under the covers and pretended to be asleep. Jeanette knelt by the cradle, clasped her hands and sang a hymn. Soon after this the children were called away to see the nurse.

When Jeanette returned to the playroom she called out, "Where's my baby?" Nesta came running to her, calling, "Mummy, Mummy." Jeanette held the cradle while Nesta got in again, shook up the mattress and placed it under Nesta's head as a pillow, offered another doll, covered her and patted her, saying, "You won't get out of bed, will you?" Then after pouring out another "cup of tea" which she offered to Nesta, she went out of the "house" and played in a corner with June. Some time afterwards, finding that Jeanette did not return, Nesta followed her to the corner and also played with June.

*Frank, 3:4, and Jeanette, 3:7.*

October 23. Frank and Jeanette had been looking at some picture postcards for some time. Presently, Frank put the cards away into a box, walked around the room carrying the box, then, coming to Jeanette, called out, "Knock, knock." Jeanette pretended to hand him some money as he sold some of the cards to her. Then he walked round again, came back to Jeanette and took her cards saying, "I'm the postman; I'll put them in the letter-box." He walked about the room again with the box on his shoulder and a card in his hand. Presently he put two chairs in a corner behind the cupboard door and both he and Jeanette hid behind them and sat on the floor screeching, "Wee-ee-ee." One or two more children joined them and they played behind the chairs with a tea-cup which one of them had found. Then Frank moved the chairs, putting them into a long row, saying, "I'll make a bus." He sat for a long time on the end chair making engine noises, then he picked up the box of cards and ran away again, shouting, "Bogey man! Bogey man!" A little later he crawled up to the children behind the chairs saying, "Boo, boo, let me come in."



*Nelly*, 3:9, *Ethel*, 3:5, *Ellen*, 3:6, and *Cecil*, 2:3.

May 25. Nelly got into the pram to be Ethel's baby. Ethel patted her, ordered her to get up so that she might put a shawl round her, then covered her with a blanket and offered her a doll. Ethel, in order to get rid of Kitty (2:3) who had been watching her, told her to go out into the garden; when Kitty returned a few moments later, Nelly also tried to send her away. Kitty, however, firmly held on to the handle of the pram, then helped Ethel to get the pram out into the garden by moving toys out of the way. As they were going, Nelly commanded, "Out there, go out there," pointing to the garden. Ellen came up to them and offered a pillow, saying, "There's a pillow for her," then stood watching while Ethel rearranged the coverlets. At this point Kitty found a horse for herself, put a doll on its back and went off to play alone. Nelly pretended to cry while Ethel was rearranging the covers, then she lay down pretending to be asleep; a few moments later she woke up, laughing and calling, "Mummy, Mummy". Just then, Cecil seized the handle of the pram, but Ethel commanded, "Leave my pram alone!" Cecil then went to the back of the pram and pushed, making Nelly cry, until both Ethel and Ellen threatened him and sent him away. Ethel then picked up a doll and began to wrap it in a shawl. Nelly, becoming impatient, called out, "Make haste," then after a moment or two, commanded, "Put it round me, Mummy." Ethel tried to wrap the shawl round her shoulders; Nelly at first laughed while this was being done, then she began to cry in a babyish way. Ethel put her arms lovingly round Nelly and crooned, "What's she doing then?" However, as Nelly wriggled free from her embrace, Ethel began to hit her and then resumed the tucking up. Nelly, however, would no longer submit to this. She got out of the pram, then, turning to Ethel, said in a wheedling voice, "Oo, let *me* wheel the pram." Ethel got into the pram and picked up a tiny feeding bottle which she had found in the pram; Nelly snatched it from her, but gave it back when Ethel said, "Me, Mummy." Ethel then hid it in the bottom of the pram, saying, "Ain't got it now." Nelly put a pillow under her head and said, "Now lay back," then tucked the covers round her and wheeled the pram away.

*Ethel*, 3:3, *Ivy*, 3:7, *June*, 3:2 and *Jessica*, 2:11.

March 22. Ethel, Ivy, June and Jessica were running round the room together with their arms round each other's necks when Jessica bumped into a cupboard and began to cry. Ivy stood looking at her sympathetically, but Ethel went to her, patted her face, and



pulled out her handkerchief to wipe Jessica's eyes. Ivy then went to talk to an adult and June smacked her. Ivy rubbed her hand and looked as if she might be going to cry, when Ethel came up making sympathetic noises: "Oo-oo," then rubbed Ivy's hand and patted it, murmuring, "All better, all better."

*Ivy*, 3:8, and *Lionel*, 2:10.

April 18. Ivy had been playing with the peg-board, but seeing Lionel waiting for it she put the pegs in ready for him and offered it to him. As he walked away with it he dropped the pegs on the floor and Ivy left her play and helped him to pick them up.

*Lena*, 3:7, and *Nelly*, 3:10

June 6. Lena fell over a wooden box and was unable to get up as she was wedged between the box and the fence. Nelly ran to her and helped her to get up, then sat her on the box until she had recovered from her fright.

*Ethel*, 3:7, *Danny*, 2:3, *Lionel*, 3:1, and *Kitty*, 2:7.

July 17. Ethel saw Danny crying after Lionel had hit him and went to him to comfort him. She put her arm round him and held up her forefinger as if to hush him, saying, "Oh, oh," very sympathetically; then she offered him a coloured brick as a solace. A few days later she saw Kitty sitting on the floor crying after the nursery helper had been cross with her because she had taken off her shoes immediately after the helper had put them on for her. Ethel knelt beside Kitty and cuddled her, then, drawing Nelly's attention first to another girl who was sitting near and then to Kitty who was still crying, she said, "She hit her."

#### SUMMARY OF THE MAIN SOCIAL TRENDS IN THIS GROUP OF CHILDREN

This outline of the typical social approaches and responses of the children of 2 to 4 years of age in school A, as seen in these "cross-section" studies, shows how, as a group, these children expressed their growing awareness of others and how they began to manage the relationships between themselves and other children. It shows also how these approaches and responses seemed to change as children became more experienced and confident in the group life in the nursery school.

When studying the records for their significance in relation to the social development of the children, I found that they could be grouped according to the general emphasis at 2, 3 and 4 years of age, for to some extent the behaviour seemed to bear some relation to



the ages of the children. My intention here has been to indicate by the arrangement of the material, the overall developmental pattern which I found in this group of children. This pattern shows the gradual trend from the indifferent and defensive attitudes which were shown by some of the youngest children and of newcomers to the nursery school, to all those variations in behaviour indicative of the children's growing awareness of others, shown by the attitudes of hostility and rivalry as well as through the friendliness and readiness to co-operate which emerged as these children discovered mutual interests in their play. These trends are set out in the summary which follows.

1. In the children of 2 to 3 years of age and in some newly admitted three-year-olds there seemed to be little real awareness of other children as entities to be considered for their own sake. These children were primarily concerned with themselves, with the things they wanted or did not want; they appeared to be ego-centric<sup>1</sup> in attitude and behaviour, and to have little regard for other children except in so far as they formed part of the background in the nursery school.

The varieties of behaviour which seemed to be fairly typical of this earlier period since they were observed mainly in children of 2 to 3 years included:

- (a) fear and anxiety expressed in crying; following an adult and wanting her attention and comfort; passivity; general indifference, and avoidance of others;
- (b) a general preference for being alone and for watching others, with the possibility of occasional, momentary contacts with others in the child's initial exploration of the environment, this exploration often taking the form of sampling of toys and play materials, sometimes leading to a preference for certain toys or activities;
- (c) the development by individuals of some incipient form of self-defence when meeting with interference. It was possible to recognise the difference between those children who interpreted any approach by another child as a personal threat and who reacted in a hostile way to this supposed "threat", and those who, although wary and watchful, were able to differentiate between the friendly and the hostile approaches made

<sup>1</sup> Susan Isaacs suggests that the true ego-centric attitude involves "a recognition of the *presence* of other children, but not of their personalities or independent purposes". *Social Development in Young Children*, p. 214. Routledge, 1933.



by other children and to respond according to the nature of the approach.

2. Emerging out of that introductory period of initiation into the group life in the nursery school there seemed to be a period during which there was considerable emphasis upon active exploration of and experiment with both the material and the social environment of the nursery school. The child's attention often seemed to fluctuate between concern for himself—for self-preservation, for possession of toys, for power, in which he himself was the predominating figure—and concern with other children in which his concern for himself was subsidiary to his interest in other children.

The varieties of behaviour observed included:

- (a) solitary play in which discoveries were made, new skills acquired, and real achievements enjoyed. When a child was mastering a particular skill, e.g., learning to ride a tricycle, he tended to want this toy for the greater part of the time, to regard it as his exclusive possession, and to resent the use of it by others; approaches by others were then likely to be interpreted as possible threats or attacks;
- (b) a growing readiness to make contact with other children, with emphasis upon the discovery of appropriate initial methods of approach and response to other children, often with a view to being accepted by them. Quite persistent attempts were sometimes made by children wanting to be noticed by others, there was then much less concern with toys and play materials;
- (c) these attempts to make contact with others sometimes led to some experimental interference with other children which was intended to evoke some kind of response from them; active retaliatory reactions to the interference of others who were not too strong and powerful were also often observed. In this experimenting, there seemed to be a pronounced and active attempt to make discoveries about the nature and behaviour of other children, and at the same time, to discover safe ways of retaliating; such retaliation was sometimes directed towards a child other than the aggressor, sometimes towards toys or other inanimate objects.

3. As the children approached four years of age, there seemed to be a consolidation of their previous experiences and discoveries, giving them a more firmly established basis for social interaction, both as expressed in rivalry and hostility and as expressed in friendly interaction in group play.



This social interaction was seen in three main ways:

- (a) by deliberate attempts to evoke responses in others by experimental interference of an aggressive nature; by active retaliation to interference; by experimenting in social relationships in group aggressive play. In this kind of experimenting, there was evidence of a considerable degree of social awareness;
- (b) by experimenting in active forms of friendly domination and leadership, in which discoveries were made about the best ways of managing others, of compromising with them, or, if unsuccessful, of giving in to them;
- (c) by active co-operation and friendliness in group relationships, finding expression in a great variety of social contacts. In such relationships there appeared to be a growing awareness of other children as entities to be considered for their own sake, the expression of this awareness being evident in the children's increasing ability to group themselves together spontaneously in play with other children, to accept rôles allotted to them, or spontaneously to adopt rôles likely to lead to their acceptance by the group.

Some of the older children in the group were beginning to show some appreciation of and concern for the feelings of other children, and some ability to act in appropriate ways as the situation demanded. This was particularly marked among the older girls, partly because of the nature of these girls, partly because, on account of their numbers, they were more noticeable than the boys; there were twelve girls but only five boys among the children of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 years; of these boys, George was one apart by reason of his retardation in adjustment,<sup>1</sup> and Harold and Sidney, although showing rivalry and hostility to each other, often formed a united front together against other children, when they were experimentally or deliberately aggressive towards others.

#### *Hostility and aggression and the growth of social awareness*

To understand the overall pattern of social behaviour found in this group of children it seemed to me that it should be studied not only on a developmental basis, but also in relation to specific situations and the social interactions occurring within them. It was particularly necessary to do this if one was to understand the hostile and aggressive trends in the social development of young children, the feelings lying behind such manifestations, and the meaning for

<sup>1</sup> See study of George, pp. 96-100.



the individual child of those situations evoking hostile and aggressive feelings.

This period of 2 to 4 years in which the child is "coming to terms" with feelings of hostility, rivalry and aggression in himself and in others seems to be of particular importance in his achievement of social adjustment. To show how the hostile reactions of young children may best be understood, I have brought together some examples of aggressive behaviour<sup>1</sup> in the context of the situations giving rise to this behaviour.

1. Janet and Marjorie were playing side by side with prams. Janet was putting a doll to bed in her pram and tucking it up with blankets. June (3:3) suddenly approached and snatched one of Janet's blankets, then waited to see what would happen. Janet immediately snatched it back. June then snatched Marjorie's coverlet, but threw it away when Marjorie began to smack her, and ran away. (Janet and Marjorie were twins of 3½ years of age.)

2. Sidney (3:9) was playing in the sand-pit, digging with the only spade which was available, when Harold suddenly seized the spade from him. Sidney, taken by surprise, let his spade go, then hit Harold aggressively before looking around for another spade. Not finding one, he angrily threw a handful of sand at Harold. They attacked each other for a few moments and threw sand at each other, till Harold, getting rather scared, said, "I won't throw no more at you, Sid."

3. George (3:10) was playing in the sand-pit when a bigger boy threw sand over him. His only reaction was to turn away his head. When this boy left the sand-pit, however, George took up a spade, and, turning on another child, threatened him with his spade and beat the child's bucket in an aggressive way.

4. Dora (3:8) was suddenly attacked by Marjorie (3:2) who was defending her right to a toy. She did not attempt to retaliate, but, instead, went to Derrick (3:8) who was playing "motors" with the big blocks, and said to him, "Derrick, Marjorie hit me; Marjorie hit me, Derrick." Derrick's only response at first was to turn and look at Marjorie, then he left his "motor", ran over to Marjorie, smacked her, then quickly returned to his play. Dora looked on from a safe distance while he did this.

5. In the group of examples which follows, the children's retaliation was directed towards things rather than towards people.

Jessica (3:0) had unwillingly submitted to Nelly's forceful attention; as soon as she was able to escape she ran off, picked up a Teddy bear, and hit it.

<sup>1</sup> See also pp. 25-7 and 32-8.



Nelly (3:8) was wheeling a pram when Len (2:7) began to follow her and to try persistently to get it. She tried to hurry away with the pram, then suddenly, as if exasperated, left her pram and knocked over a tall tower of bricks built by Joan.

Lionel (3:0) had been playing with the tricycle, then left it for a few minutes to go to another occupation. While he was away from the tricycle another child began to use it. Lionel became very cross when he found the tricycle in use and began to kick and scream; he was taken into the playroom by a helper, and immediately began to knock over the chairs and to throw toys about the room.

Terry (3:1) had managed to get the small toy motor and was watching the wheels go round when June (3:5) came up and seized it from him. Terry hid his face in his hands for a moment, then picked up a chair, put it on a stool, and pushed it violently so that it fell.

Godfrey (3:2), unable to get possession of the motor which he wanted, walked slowly away, crying and making a low moaning noise near an adult, trying to draw attention to himself. He shook and banged the door as he stood crying.

6. Tom (3:2) was playing in the sand-pit when George (3:8) began dancing about in the sand. Tom protested by pushing him away. George then picked up a box and called to Tom tauntingly. (It was apparently a box with which Tom had previously been playing.) Tom took no notice and continued playing in the sand. A little later, Tom got possession of a toy pistol. Several other children tried in various ways to get possession of the pistol, e.g., by coaxing, by persuasion, by coercion, but without success. Then Tom saw Philip leaning on the box with which he had previously been playing and, approaching him, pointed to something else as if to persuade him to give up the box. Philip, however, refused to give it up, so Tom went off to join two other boys who were playing with skittles. Philip, leaving the box, shouted to Tom, "Look behind you; look behind you." Tom seemed not to hear, for he took no notice. Philip then accosted George, pointed at Tom who was still holding the toy pistol, and appeared to be telling George to get the pistol. George crept up behind Tom and snatched the pistol away. Tom's screams brought an adult to the rescue and the pistol was returned to Tom.

7. Sidney (3:9) had been playing with the car when Harold (3:8) succeeded in taking it from him. Sidney let his car go, but retaliated by smacking and pushing Harold. He then tried unsuccessfully to get Len's bike. As he stood miserably looking around, Harold pointed to a bike that was being used by another child and called out encouragingly, "Get that one, Sid."



In the notes which follow, I have tried to show how an evaluation of hostile and aggressive behaviour depends upon the interpretation of the situations in which it occurs. Various forms of aggressive behaviour such as threatening, accusing, snatching, smacking and attacking were found in situations such as those illustrated by the examples just given. Such behaviour was observed in situations in which children had suffered interference or frustration at the hands of another child, or in which they had themselves interfered with or caused frustration to others; it illustrates very dramatically the impact of young children upon each other in particular circumstances.

In example 1 the snatching was experimental and of a tentative nature so that Janet's and Marjorie's retaliation resulted in June's withdrawal, a fairly typical defensive reaction in a young three-year-old, but also a wise procedure in this case, since there were two against one, Janet and Margaret being twins, and five months older than June.

In example 2 where the attack was a deliberate attempt to gain possession of the spade and where, in the ensuing fight, the boys, being of the same age, were more evenly matched, the original aggressor, Harold, sought to end the retaliatory attack by a placatory gesture—a promise not to throw any more sand, not, as one might have expected, by the return of the spade.

In examples 3 and 4 the hostile acts were not immediate retaliatory ones directed towards the aggressor. In example 3 the aggressive retaliation consisted of an attack by George upon a child who had had nothing to do with the initial aggression and upon the child's possession (the sand bucket). (Some later records of George will show that his reactions in this situation were characteristic of his reactions generally.<sup>1</sup>) In example 4 the aggressive retaliation was carried out by a child who had had nothing to do with the initial aggression but who responded to an appeal for help by "punishing" the aggressor. This was done at the instigation and in support of the child who had first been smacked. Incidentally, although Dora was six months older than Marjorie, this advantage was offset by the fact that as Marjorie was one of twins, when one twin was involved in a situation like this, both might have to be reckoned with.

The examples in 5 are all of children who, needing some discharge for pent-up emotion, found a "safe" object upon which to vent their feelings, e.g., dolls or animals were punched or hit, toys were kicked or thrown about the room in a disorderly manner, a tower of bricks built by another child was suddenly knocked

<sup>1</sup> Records of George, pp. 98-100.



down, chairs or tables were pushed over. In four instances where frustration had been experienced in connection with the loss of a toy, the reaction was one of disorderly behaviour, such as knocking things over; in Jessica's case, however, where her reaction was to the unwelcome attention she herself had received at the hands of another child, the retaliation took the form of a direct attack on a Teddy bear—possibly used as a substitute for the child from whom she had had to suffer the unwelcome attention, a child who was eight months older than herself and who could not therefore be safely punished in person. It seemed that when a child attacked inanimate objects after herself being attacked, she could do so without fear of the counter-attack that might have followed if her retaliation had been directed towards the aggressor himself. In some cases, it appeared probable that some degree of anxiety inhibited a child from directly expressing aggressive feelings, either because he was not yet sufficiently experienced to know how to deal with the immediate threats from an aggressive child, or because of a general state of anxiety, evidence of which could be seen in his general attitude to life and in his reactions to difficulties and frustrations.<sup>1</sup>

Example 6 differs from examples 1 and 2 in that whereas, in these two instances, possession of a toy was primarily the reason for the attack, in example 6 the motive of power, expressed in the form of teasing, taunting and inciting to aggression, seemed to be much more in evidence than the desire to possess. The aggressive act of seizing the pistol, carried out at the instigation of another child, could be traced back to events that had happened earlier in the morning. There was an indication here of sustained rivalry and hostility between Tom and George throughout the morning; it appeared almost as if Philip was aware of this and used this knowledge when he incited George to attack Tom.

In example 7 the predominating motive behind the aggressive attack was that of the desire to possess, but the retaliatory attack was made towards another child for the possession of his bike instead of being directed towards the aggressor. It is interesting here to see how the aggressor attempted to divert Sidney's attention from himself and from the motor which he had just taken from Sidney, by inciting him to pursue, in *another* direction, his attack for possession of a bike.

It became obvious in my study of the children, that aggressive

<sup>1</sup> See study of George, pp. 96-100.



acts, although often superficially of a similar nature, were expressive of such motives as self-defence, rivalry, the desire for possession, or for power; it seemed that such acts were sometimes not entirely reactions to specific situations but appeared to be reactions of a child to his own personal interpretations of such situations, and needed to be understood as such.

Lois Barclay Murphy, discussing in her study of the personalities and the social relationships of young children,<sup>1</sup> the variations in playground behaviour of the children, states that although some clear conclusions were reached about the children's sympathetic and unsympathetic responses on the basis of statistical material so long as the investigators were willing to work on a superficial descriptive level, important questions were raised which could not be answered by the use of the statistical procedure then available. She suggests that attempts to answer the questions by further analyses of relationships in "qualitative" terms might help to clarify the problem, and illustrates what she means by giving as an example a simple overt item of behaviour such as "stares at a crying child", showing from a brief analysis of contexts of behaviour the varieties of meaning it may have for the child. For example, "... a stare appears in a context of sympathy or of curiosity; it is sometimes the only overt sign of intense inner feeling, or the predecessor of energetic, active response: or sometimes it is merely a casual reaction of the moment". Briefly, similar behaviour may appear with quite different meanings, depending upon the total orientation of the child. She sums up her study of sympathetic behaviour in young children playing in a group as follows:

"... the behaviour which constitutes this trait is dependent upon the functional relation of the child to each situation, and when shifts in status give a basis for a changed interpretation of the situation in which the child finds himself, changed behaviour occurs. A significant proportion of the variations in a child's behaviour which we have discussed are related to the child's security, as affected by competitive relations with other children, disapproval by adults, or guilt and self-accusation in relation to injury to another child."

It is clear that this "functional relation of the child to each situation" in this matter of individual and group hostility and aggression is of considerable importance. At the same time, in seeking for clues as to the significance of hostile and aggressive behaviour in the development of social awareness, it seemed to me that it was possible to differentiate between the kind of hostility which is ego-

<sup>1</sup> Lois Barclay Murphy: *Social Behaviour and Child Personality*, ch. VI. Columbia University Press, 1937.



centric and defensive, and that which is of a socially reciprocal nature, taking the form of active, aggressive interaction between children who are equally matched, who are better able to hold their own because they are more aware of and knowledgeable about other children, and whose approaches and responses are more varied and complex and at the same time more discriminating.

In the majority of children with whom I have had experience I have observed this change in emphasis from the ego-centric, defensive forms of hostility to hostility of a socially reciprocal nature, a change in emphasis indicative of a developmental trend; when, in some of the older nursery school children, there was an almost complete absence of any open hostility or aggression, or an emphasis upon the ego-centric, defensive types of hostility, occurring at an age when active reciprocal forms are more usual, this seemed to be an indication that the child was having difficulty in making satisfactory adjustment.

#### *Friendliness and co-operation and the growth of social awareness*

Turning from the more aggressive forms of social experimenting to those in which friendliness and co-operation in dramatic play were most in evidence, the records<sup>1</sup> give some indication of the more complex social situations and the correspondingly more complex social behaviour occurring in the older and more experienced children in Nursery School A, and show the kind of basis upon which such friendly interaction took place as the children became more "socially aware".

In these social situations in which "active friendliness and co-operation" were the predominant patterns of behaviour, one of the main reasons for this friendly co-operation in dramatic play seems to have been the capacity of the participants to take on particular rôles, i.e., spontaneously to identify themselves with the people they were portraying. Looking into the relationships between the children, one found some interesting adjustments taking place. It seemed as if the rôle, to a large extent, determined the behaviour, so that when Nesta and Nelly were the "babies", their behaviour was typically babyish, whereas Jeanette and Ethel as "Mummies", took on "mother" characteristics. When Nelly and Ethel changed places, however, the change of rôle gave rise to corresponding changes in the children's behaviour, so that Ethel became the typical "baby" and Nelly the typical "mother". At the same time, they seemed to bring to each of these rôles something from those they had just discarded, which made this "mother-baby" situation slightly different

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 41-5.



from the previous one; e.g., Nelly's snatching back of the feeding bottle, Ethel's hiding of the bottle in the bottom of the pram.

Within such dramatic forms of play, there was opportunity for the overlapping of ideas, for the working out by the children of all kinds of phantasies of the "good Mummy" and the "bad Mummy", of the "good baby" and the "bad baby". In their playing out of these rôles, the children seemed to be prepared to put up with quite a lot of rough and even playfully aggressive treatment at the hands of other children, whereas if they had met the same treatment outside these particular rôles, in all probability they would have reacted in hostile or defensive ways.

In such dramatic play, situations occurred in which the natural leader emerged; it provided also the setting in which various adaptations could take place, such as "give and take" between the children, resulting in a mutual feeling of goodwill. This pronounced feeling of unity between those who were thus "related" in play seemed to some extent to account for the equally pronounced hostility felt towards the "outsider" who might try to join in without first establishing a relationship in line with the already established group (e.g., in line with the play in the "mother and baby" group). Quite a lot of determination was shown both by Ethel and by Nelly in their attempts to prevent Kitty from joining them, but Kitty was equally determined, and, by establishing herself as one of Ethel's "children" (when she insisted on holding the handle of the pram), succeeded in getting herself temporarily accepted. Ellen, who was also obviously interested in this mother-baby play, made her first approach by offering a pillow, but then made no further approach until Cecil's experimental hostility gave her an opportunity to link herself with Ethel against him.

Frank, on the other hand, achieved some "overlapping" with Jeanette by his assumption of a rôle which was acceptable to Jeanette, despite the fact that, having first let her have some of his cards, he almost immediately took them back again. It is likely that Frank, *as* Frank, would have met with some resistance, but as "the postman" his action was accepted as part of the pattern of the play. Frank seemed to be experimenting with the various means of getting himself accepted by others: first he was the man selling cards, then he was the postman, in both rôles taking the lead. Then, with Jeanette, in the hiding and screeching game, there seemed to be a complete identification with each other, from which Frank again emerged as leader when he initiated the "bus" game in which he took the most important rôle. His sudden cutting-off of his association with the group when he assumed the rôle of



"bogey man" was followed by his return to and anticipation of acceptance by the group when he said, "Boo, boo, let me come in."

These records of friendly interplay between the older three-year-old children show how in dramatic situations they identified themselves with the people who were important to them. To take on the rôle of "Mummy" or "baby" at once determined the relationship between the children assuming these rôles and thus set the stage for the social adjustments that took place. It appeared that, in the main, the emphasis was upon the emotional relationships between, for instance, mother and baby, so that the resulting play was often the vehicle for the expression of tensions and satisfactions in the mother-baby situation. In their identifications, these children seemed to be impelled by the emotions inherent in the social relationships they were portraying. Within the flexible context of dramatic play, material things were subsidiary to the human relationships that were being explored; the rôles were exchanged, discarded and new ones assumed in line with the inner dictates of the individuals in the group, inner dictates which seemed to have their origin in the feeling-life of the children. It was particularly interesting to see how individuals who spontaneously came together in such play seemed to complement each other in their respective rôles, and to gain a great deal of satisfaction from the sense of personal fulfilment which came from this playing of complementary rôles.

It seemed to be a usual thing for two children of the same age to exchange rôles as Nelly and Ethel did when they came together as "mother" and "baby"; this exchange of rôles was not so likely to happen, however, when the "baby" was a very young child who had been appropriated by an older child as a *plaything* rather than as a *playmate*. When, sometimes, an older child persistently played the part of a "baby", and in a domineering way claimed the services of another child as "mother", this might in certain cases be an indication of some difficulty in adjustment. For example, a somewhat forceful girl of four years in a nursery group of children of 3½ to 5 years used always to want to be the baby in the pram; she often masturbated while in the pram. The "mother", who was under the domination of the "baby", was a quiet, rather ineffective little girl of about the same age. Where behaviour which was fairly typical at one age, e.g., 2 to 3 years, occurred in a child of another age, e.g., 4 to 5 years, and was therefore "out of place" in the developmental pattern of the older child, it seemed that this might be one of the indications by which one might recognise a child who, for this reason, appeared to be a "misfit" in the group.



## ADJUSTMENT TO GROUP LIFE OF SOME CHILDREN IN NURSERY SCHOOL B

In order to give a more consecutive picture of the adjustment to group life of nursery school children, I have included here some of the records kept by the Head-teacher and assistant teachers in school B. They consist of (a) a few individual records showing the progress in adjustment of two-year-old children during their first months in the school; (b) one longer study to show the development of a boy from the age of 3:3 when he was admitted to the school, till his transfer to the infant school at the age of 5 years.

*(a) Individual records of two-year-olds, showing their progress in adjustment during their first months in the nursery school*  
*Teddy, 2:0 to 2:6.*

Teddy was said to be very strong-willed; he had a limited vocabulary and rarely spoke. His bowel and bladder control was not fully established.

First term. (2:0 to 2:3.) Teddy, on his admission to the nursery school, was immediately interested in the water play, and concentrated for long periods playing experimentally with great determination; for a young child, he showed unusual skill in pouring water from one container to another. Later in the term he began to play in the Home Corner, putting dolls to bed, saying, "Go to bye byes." The teacher comments: "He is a very determined little boy, often attempting to take toys from older and bigger children and occasionally hitting them if he does not get what he wants. During the term he has become increasingly friendly towards adults, sometimes going to them to show them what he has done. He is beginning to talk more."

Second term. (2:4 to 2:6.) During this term he has become interested in other activities; he has tried hammering nails into a piece of wood, discarding each nail with which he was unsuccessful and trying another; he has also experimented with pincers in an endeavour to discover how to hold a nail with them. He is now building with bricks, in particular with the big red bricks, and shows an unusual appreciation of symmetry; he is beginning to enjoy playing with sand. He has begun to be more aware of other children, e.g., when an older child has tried to make him do something, he has raised his hand as if to hit him. He has shown a sense of rivalry towards a brother and sister who need a good bit of attention from adults; on one occasion he playfully pretended to punch Jack; later in the term he went through a phase of imitating Jack and his sister Gillian, putting his head on one side and sulking



when asked to do something he did not want to do. He has sometimes been aggressive towards Gillian and occasionally towards other children; he has occasionally bitten others. In the main, however, he is very sociable towards both adults and children.

*Daisy, 2:0 to 2:7.*

Daisy showed no signs of distress when left by her mother; she seemed quite happy and friendly and was very lively. She ate well but lacked skill in feeding herself.

End of first week. During the week Daisy has shown no distress when leaving her mother. She wanders a good deal, but sometimes plays with water, returning to it after periods of wandering. She seems happy, and has responded to an adult by saying one or two words.

Third week. She was very unwell during the week and cried for her mother. She was kept at home for a few days.

Fourth week. Daisy is better and has returned to school; she has not cried for her mother. She is quite happy, and has enjoyed playing in the Home Corner, in particular, putting dolls to bed. She has eaten well and has been sleeping soundly.

Third month. (2:3.) Daisy plays very happily. She is keenly interested in the pram and plays with it all day if she gets the opportunity; she screams persistently if anyone tries to get it from her or if anyone else has it. She is friendly with adults but as yet makes little contact with children. She is becoming more skilful in feeding herself.

Fifth month. (2:5.) Daisy comes in joyfully in the morning calling "Hullo" to the teacher. She then demands the bike, for riding on the bike is her latest interest. If another child is using the bike when she arrives, she cries and complains to her mother and refuses to let her go. She gets over this upset quickly as soon as her mother has gone.

She loves the doll's pram and trots around with a doll in it; she spends long periods putting the doll into the pram, tucking it up, taking it out, putting it back and tucking it up again, repeating this over and over again. She plays with water in the "house" and enjoys bathing the doll. She likes playing with water and sand and frequently paints. She eats well and is more skilful now in handling the cutlery; she sleeps soundly.

Sixth month. (2:6.) Daisy is developing rapidly; her speech has improved tremendously; her health is good and she is full of vitality, physically and mentally. She enjoys Home Corner play, painting, and also play with water and sand. She has formed a



friendship with Alice and plays alongside her. She is friendly with children and adults, is reasonable to deal with and is very ready to co-operate. She loves to tell other children what to do. She has recently become a server at meal-times and manages very skilfully.

Seventh month. (2:7.) She has been delighted to bath the plastic doll and wants to do this nearly every day. She has also become interested in sawing and, with help, saws several pieces of wood every day. She has spontaneously taken it upon herself to help the teacher to clear up after the play period. She expects to be a server every day, and serves the children quite competently. She is interested and intelligent in all she does.

*Lorna*, 2:2 to 2:8.

Lorna was very upset at coming to school; she cried a great deal on the first day; she ate nothing and was very upset when taken to the bath-room. She sat motionless for most of the day and cried when her mother came.

Second and third weeks. Lorna still cries a lot when brought to school and bursts into tears when her mother arrives in the afternoon. She sits or stands passively during the day, making no response to anything or anybody. She will eat when fed, but cries during rest time when on her bed. She will look at a picture book, but seems not to have enough initiative to turn over the pages.

Fourth week. She still cries on arrival and when her mother comes in the afternoon; she is passive and expressionless during the day. She has painted on two successive mornings during the week, appearing to use this situation as a vantage point from which to watch other people and things, yet, at the same time, to feel some sense of security.

Third month. (2:5.) Lorna no longer cries when she is left in the morning nor when her mother comes in the afternoon. She now seems to be happy in the nursery; she watches other children a great deal, looks at books, and paints occasionally. She is beginning to make spontaneous contact with adults, though she does not respond to requests made by adults or children.

Fourth month. (2:6.) (After the Easter holiday.) For the first two weeks she seemed to be back again where she was when she was first admitted; by the end of the month, however, she was becoming interested in playing with water, sand, paint and with the doll's pram. She is now much happier and is taking part in group times, singing and joining in finger plays.

Sixth month. (2:8.) Lorna has made very good and rapid progress during the month; she is now thoroughly settled and happy and is



an accepted member of the group. She has begun to make spontaneous contact with Ena and is playing alongside her with a doll's pram, and with sand and water. She is now lively, runs about, laughs, gets excited in her play, is friendly and sociable with adults and co-operates with them. She has become a keen and efficient server, and is thrilled when asked to wait on the children at meal-times.

(The teacher records that the mother was very fussy about Lorna's cleanliness and tidiness, e.g., she would wash Lorna's face when it was already clean. She was therefore not very pleased when Lorna became more active in school because Lorna was then not as clean and tidy.)

*Hugh, 2:2 to 2:8.*

Hugh was very distressed on his first day in school; he cried so much that he made himself sick. He refused to eat or to go to the lavatory and cried when on his bed during the afternoon rest.

Third day. Hugh was not so distressed today, though he cried at intervals during the day and followed the teacher about, asking, "Mummy coming?" He played a little with toys which he had brought from home. He ate a little pudding.

Third week. Hugh is much happier, though he still cries on arrival. He follows an adult around and will occasionally play if she stays with him. He has been persuaded to taste a little of the first course at dinner-time and usually eats some pudding.

(The teacher records that the mother had reported that she had never been able to get Hugh to eat any meat or vegetables.)

Fourth week. Hugh is no longer unhappy when he is left by his mother; he seems to be settling down well, though he still tends to follow adults. He will run up and down and jump about when an adult is in the room. He enjoys group times.

Sixth week. Hugh has been upset by his mother's illness, but has nevertheless played for short periods with water and with trains and has sometimes looked at books. He is making a great deal of contact with adults and is affectionate towards them. He is still only eating potato and pudding; he sleeps well during the afternoon rest period.

Eighth week. (2:4.) Hugh has played with sand and water when an adult has been near; he has gone into the garden only if he could hold her hand. He is beginning to be less difficult about eating.

Fourth month. (2:6.) (After the Easter holiday.) Hugh is now much less timid; he plays in the garden quite confidently. He likes playing with water and sand, and has begun to run up and down



an inclined plank and to enjoy jumping off. He likes to help an adult to sweep up and helps to bring chairs to the table in readiness for dinner. He still needs a great deal of encouragement.

Fifth month. Away ill.

Sixth month. (2:8.) Hugh is now lively and very happy; he seems really confident. He plays with water, sand and bricks, and likes to paint. He has begun to make contact with two girls, and chatters a great deal to adults. He now eats all his dinner, including meat and vegetables.

*Roy*, 2:1 to 3:7.

Roy was at first very excitable and extremely aggressive; he often hit other children in an attempt to get what he wanted. By the end of his first month he had become more settled but was still aggressive. He generally played with water and sand and in the Home Corner.

Fourth month. (2:5.) Roy is still playing with water and sand; he enjoys making mud pies. He has played with another boy in the Home Corner.

Third term. (2:8 to 2:11.) Roy is still very excitable but is less aggressive than when he was first admitted; he is sociable with children and adults. He frequently plays in the Home Corner and with water and sand.

At the beginning of his second year in school, Roy (3:1) is transferred to the "big nursery". The Head-teacher reports that Roy is interested in the play of the bigger boys and is often on the fringe of their group play. He is often noisy and aggressive but is also friendly and sociable, particularly with the teacher.

Fifth term. (3:5 to 3:7.) Roy joins excitedly in the big boys' play with boxes. He enjoys physical contact with other children and issues a number of orders. He is still showing a good deal of aggression. During the term he has, however, become increasingly interested in social relationships with other children and for a time has seemed to be less interested in play materials. By the end of the term he had been accepted as one of the "big boys" and as a member of the "gang" working on various constructions with big boxes. He is lively and independent and is beginning to experiment in organising dramatic play with other boys.

*Jennifer*, 2:11 to 3:3.

Jennifer had been attending a day nursery since she was a baby; she had been awaiting transfer to the nursery school since the age of two years. She was brought to the nursery school by her grand-



mother on the day she was admitted; she showed no reluctance at leaving her grandmother, settled down to play immediately and spoke quite freely both to adults and children.

The following are summaries of the teacher's periodical reports of Jennifer.

First week. Jennifer is very confident in her relationships with children and adults. She spends most of her time going in quick succession from one activity to another, experimenting with various play materials. Her uncontrolled handling of water suggests that she has had no opportunity to play with water or paint. She is very determined and energetic, particularly in her experimental approach to other children which often takes the form of overturning what other children are playing with. She is restless at meal- and sleep-times.

Second week. Jennifer is specially interested in playing with water and paint though she is liable to spill them. She is still running around a good bit, but is showing signs of becoming more stable. She is more manageable at meal- and sleep-times.

Third week. (After the Easter holiday.) Jennifer is much more controlled in her movements; she is becoming very sensible when using water or paint. She is specially keen on house play and likes to tidy the Home Corner. She is still restless at meal- and sleep-times.

Fourth week. Jennifer continues to be interested in water play and in Home Corner play; she particularly likes the toy iron and spends much time "ironing". She is still difficult about eating.

Second month. (3:1.) Home Corner play continues to be Jennifer's main interest; she likes to take water into the "house". She has occasionally consented to go with Cissie to the "big nursery" where she has played as "Cissie's baby"; she seems to have enjoyed this. She loves to be independent in looking after herself, particularly in the bath-room. She has been chosen to be the server at dinner-time; as a result she has been less difficult about eating.

Third month. (3:2.) (After the Whitsun holiday.) Jennifer is playing very happily, mainly in the Home Corner, where she likes to play with the tea-set and water and with the big pram. She sometimes goes into the "big nursery" and begs the bigger children to let her ride on the big bike. She is a very efficient server at meal-times, but still continues to be somewhat restless at meal- and sleep-times.

Fourth month. (3:3.) She often goes to the "big nursery" to play in the "house"; she has become very friendly with Jill.

Although these reports of some of the children in school B lack detail, it is possible to find in them some evidence of an overall



pattern of adjustment to the group life in the nursery school similar to that yielded by the "cross-section" records of the children in school A. The fact that these children were admitted to a small group would, to some extent and in some cases, account for their easier initiation into the group life in school B, as compared with school A where the group was larger. At the same time, there were differences in the initial reactions of individual two-year-olds in school B which could not be accounted for by the size of the group to which they were admitted, or in terms of developmental stages; e.g., Daisy and Jennifer, who showed no distress on admission to the school; Lorna, who was very much upset; Teddy, who was immediately interested and active; Hugh, who was so distressed that he nearly made himself sick; and Roy, who was very excitable and aggressive.

This individuality of response is also to some extent evident in the "cross-section" records in school A; e.g., Lionel seemed to be unduly sensitive to the possibility of attack by older children, and showed this sensitivity by stamping his feet, screaming, and shouting "No! No!" even at the approach of another child (pp. 25-6). It was clear that he interpreted the advances made by older children as threats, while at the same time he sometimes showed a readiness to approach and to respond to other children nearer his own age, particularly if he could take the initiative (pp. 29-30). Other two-year-olds also had their own individual methods of reacting: Jessica, who tended to be passive and submissive but was able to respond to friendly advances; Ada, whose reaction to interference was a much more active one but who, at the same time, allowed herself to be dominated by some of the bigger girls; Cecil, who showed submissive responses and, at the same time, could be actively hostile.

*(b) Study of Guy from the age of 3:3 to 5:0 to show his development while he was attending the nursery school*

This record of Guy's adjustment to the group life in the nursery school from the time of his admission at the age of 3:3 until his transfer to the infant school at the age of five years will be found to be also a record of his personal adjustment.

Guy had a sister of seven years and a baby brother of eight months. The family lived in two rooms, and as there was no garden, opportunities for the children's play were very much restricted. The mother was careful and conscientious, but was depressed and over-anxious, and rather bewildered at her inability to handle the situation at home. She was nervous about Guy's admission to the nursery school lest he should not be "good".



When Guy's mother brought him to school, she reported various behaviour difficulties which suggested that Guy was an emotionally disturbed boy. The difficulties which she reported were as follows: that Guy was quarrelsome with his older sister and difficult and interfering with the baby; that he was a thumb-sucker and was abnormally dependent upon his mother; that he was generally miserable, peevish and unmanageable; that he sometimes had "fits", when he screamed and became rigid and "strange", especially when he was thwarted.

The Head-teacher's description of him when he was first admitted was that he was of average size, with a pale complexion, and with eyes which were clouded and dull. His movements were slow and fairly controlled, but he had several nervous habits: he sucked his thumb or fingers, picked his nose, scratched his face, pulled at his finger nails; he carried a handkerchief around and was very anxious if it was mislaid. He seemed to be very reserved and "shut in".

During his first week in the nursery school he showed considerable distress at parting from his mother, whining, demanding to be kissed, stamping, and crying, "Kiss Mummy, kiss Roy" (the baby). He seemed to be afraid lest his mother should not return, crying, "Mummy come back soon." He was very dependent upon and demanding towards the teacher who received him from his mother, clinging to her and following her around. He watched other children closely. Each day during that week he screamed on arrival and then became interested for short periods in hammering nails into wood, in blowing a flageolet, in playing with bricks and other toys, in particular, with a box of nesting cups which he enjoyed fitting together. By the end of the week he was beginning to show some signs of independence, and greeted his mother with a smile when she called for him on the Friday afternoon. She remarked to the teacher that he seemed happier and to be more interested in his toys at home.

After the week-end, he cried again on arrival but quietened fairly soon, saying, "Mummy come back tea-time." The teacher assured him that his mother would come back, "because she loved him". During the week he spent much time watching in a hostile, defensive way, but he also began to make tentative contact with other children, to defend the toys with which he was playing, and to join occasionally in aggressive play. He was specially attracted by the activity of a small group of bigger boys with a pulley and rope, and was particularly interested when they quarrelled among themselves. He joined in the quarrels, hitting out tentatively and experimentally; when this developed into a pushing game, he was egged on by the



bigger boys who invited him to push them and fell over laughing when he did so. His playful aggression developed into real aggression when he hit really hard and threw a brick at one of the boys. He looked cross and guilty when the teacher intervened. He was still interested in the nesting cups, seeming to regard them as specially his own and resenting other children's use of them. But he was mainly interested in the group activity with the pulley; he occasionally pulled the rope himself when the other boys were not there, but by the end of the week he had begun to attach himself to this group. He seemed much happier and was beginning to greet his mother with a smile when she came for him. On Friday, however, when Vera and her little sister Sara were walking around, he suddenly jumped on Sara, knocked her over, and pummelled her. The teacher intervened and asked him to play like that with the big boys because Sara was too small for such rough play. On that afternoon he cried and whimpered when his mother came for him.

During his third week he cried or screamed on arrival, needing comfort and reassurance. He was again attracted to the big boys with their pulley, and again joined in aggressively when they quarrelled or played roughly. He was not always accepted by the bigger boys and was occasionally threatened by them. He made some attempt to join other groups, e.g., a group of children playing at being "penguins", jumping from the slide; he persistently tried to join them although they, as persistently, pushed him off. On another day he was included in tea-party play in the Home Corner, when two girls persuaded him to be their "baby". During this week, as on a previous occasion, he made a sudden attack on another small child, jumping on him and hitting him, then backing away looking angry and guilty. He scowled when the teacher told him that the younger ones must not be hurt, and at first refused the wooden doll she offered him, until, seeing a bigger boy take it, he held out his hand for it. He then became involved in a fighting and chasing game and was chosen by a bigger boy as one of the three who might go with him into his "den". On the Friday, when he screamed on arrival and wanted to be nursed by his mother, the teacher took him on her knee. When Sara came near, Guy looked aggressively at her, then began to scratch his own face. A little later he approached the group at the pulley and began to join in play with them, but was ordered off. Later he was accepted by the group when he helped to fix the pulley hook through the string on the bricks that were being hauled up. One of the boys wanted to haul Guy up on the pulley, but instead Guy was given the job of holding the rope.

He attended for only two days in the following week as he was



unwell for a few days. He seemed to be much more interested in watching children's relationships with each other and in experimenting himself in making social contacts rather than in experimenting with materials. He was very excited when his mother came for him, vying with his baby brother for her attention, and becoming very babyish. When he returned after his absence he did not cry, and very soon joined in the "den" play at the invitation of the bigger boys. During this week he became interested in experimenting with a second pulley, and seemed to become engrossed in manipulating the rope. For the first time he began to talk to the teacher about his baby brother and about how naughty his baby was when he was on his "pot".

He was again absent, this time for four weeks, when he had measles. On his return, he did not cry, but clung at first to his mother. After she had gone he watched other children, hammered nails into a box, held some wood for another boy to saw, helped a boy to pile up boxes, watched children in the Home Corner, but resisted a child who put her arm round him. He watched children playing with water, and was at first anxious and then excited when his face was squirted with water. He made some tentative attempts to join others, and looked angry when pushed away, though he made no active protest.

During the last week of the term he showed no distress at all, smiling on arrival, and joining in excitedly with rough play. He showed some experimental aggression, e.g., hitting another boy, taking another's hammer, touching other children experimentally. His mother reported that he was much happier at home; he seemed to be more interested in his toys and to play with them in a more satisfied way.

Writing of him after his first term in school, the Head-teacher commented that although he was still rather pale, his eyes were now generally bright and sometimes shone with a fierce light. His expression was sometimes one of distrust, or anger and annoyance, but he laughed much more often. He sucked his thumb less often, and did not need to carry his handkerchief around, but he still frequently picked his nails, doing this with concentration and persistence. Towards the staff, although generally reserved, he was becoming less passive and more resistant and independent; he seemed at this time to be unable to tolerate any show of affection.

During the following nine months the Head-teacher kept rough notes of Guy's progress which she summed up as follows:

Throughout the nine months (i.e., from the age of 3:7 to 4:4) Guy has made determined efforts to be one of the "big boys' gang".



This "gang" has naturally changed its leadership as the older children have reached the age of five years and have left to go to the infant school. Now at four years four months, with four other boys, he is one of the older children, and has become, with two others, one of the most influential children in the nursery.

He has been an active member of the groups working on big constructions with boxes; his play has become more purposeful, and although he is still noisy and aggressive, he has achieved skill and precision in the use of tools and materials. His hostile and aggressive acts against other children have become fewer during the nine months and they are mainly playful in character. He delights in all shouting, chasing and teasing games. These have been occurring for many months but have gradually superseded the hostile attacks on other children.

His attitude towards the staff has gradually become more friendly, he smiles and laughs more frequently; at the same time, some playful aggression, both active and verbal, has gradually appeared in his relations with the staff.

At the end of his first year in the nursery school he was a sturdy, well-built child, having a slightly better colour, bright eyes and an upright carriage, though his stance was inclined to be stiff. His movements were generally quick and impulsive; he would make sudden leaps and jumps, change his direction frequently, stop suddenly. Yet his movements, though sudden and impulsive, always appeared to be well-directed and purposeful, and to carry out his intentions. He could hammer and saw with accuracy and precision and did so with a fierce determination and with concentrated effort. His habit of sucking his thumb, or picking his fingers or nose had completely disappeared.

His typical attitude was a solemn, fierce, determined one, expressed through his use of materials, whether he was working with clay, paint, woodwork tools, or jig-saw puzzles, or joining in dramatic play or playfully aggressive group play. Noise seemed to have a great fascination for him; sometimes he would try to find out how loudly he could shout, and laugh at the end of it. He was a child who could see a joke and who was capable of experiencing great pleasure; on such occasions he seemed to "wiggle and laugh all over". Whatever he did, he tackled whole-heartedly; even his watching of other children was done with absorption and concentration as though he realised their intentions.

In his relationship with his mother, he seemed to have changed from a demanding, whiny, unhappy and jealous "baby" into a confident, playfully aggressive, yet affectionate small boy; he was



able now to tolerate and play with his younger brother. He now seemed free to express hostility verbally and to find ways of showing it that were indirect and consequently harmless.

During his remaining five months in the nursery school (i.e., from the age of 4:5 to 4:10), he remained a member of the "big boys' gang", actively assisting with the constructive and experimental work initiated by this small group of boys. He had a great admiration for the leader of the "gang" and did all he could to gain his goodwill. When occasionally he was excluded from the group by this boy, he would bide his time until an opportunity came to rejoin the group. He seemed to discover that the best way of doing this was to exclude another boy from the group and to enlist the co-operation of the leader and his "mate" against him.

When his little brother Roy was admitted to the nursery, Guy spent over a week taking care of him, never leaving his side. He had his meals and rest with Roy, even sharing Roy's rest bed; he helped to feed and wash Roy and tried to get him to play with toys. He was unusually gentle with his brother, talking affectionately to him, caressing him, and smiling at him constantly. The mother reported that Guy was very tender with Roy at home at this time.

Gradually Guy returned to his friends in the "big nursery" but he still retained his protective interest in Roy and would often run to the other room to see how he was getting on. When the mother came for them in the afternoon, he made himself responsible for getting Roy into his outdoor clothes.

At this time he became very interested in painting and in the use of bright colours. He would become very absorbed in this creative work and at the same time appreciative of the paintings made by other children. He became tender and protective towards a little girl who often used to paint alongside him, and showed pride and pleasure when this child said, "I like that boy!"

Guy's attitude towards his teacher remained cool, off-hand, sometimes playfully aggressive, yet very trusting. He would often share jokes with her, he liked to show her the constructive work which he did with the other boys. Sometimes, at rest-time, he would become confidential and talk to her about his father or about his brother Roy. He never mentioned his big sister and only mentioned his mother in connection with his small brother. It was his father who seemed to play the biggest part in his life.

When the time came for these oldest boys to leave the nursery, he and his special friend planned together how they would take most of the nursery equipment to their new class in the infant school. They collected boxes, tins and other junk and helped to carry them to their



new school. Guy left the nursery confidently and happily, swaggering a little and boasting that next term he would be a "big boy".

Guy made the transfer to the infant school without any difficulty. From the first he seemed to settle well and to regard his new teacher as a friend. When the Head-teacher of the nursery school visited the children in their new class, he escorted her round with great pride. He quickly became involved in constructive activity with his special friend—in particular, constructing a pillar box for letters—and in this work showed intelligence and a readiness to co-operate with others. He was very much interested in the letters received from his former teacher and brought a sack to school to collect the letters from the pillar box.

Guy was ready to try everything, he was excited with the new things to be explored, and adventurous in their use. He frequently burst into peals of laughter, and was ready to join in any noisy fun, though he was quieter than when he was attending the nursery school. He listened well to stories and showed an interest in books; he was alert and skilful in physical activity. His teacher found him ready to be helpful; he sometimes brought flowers for the class-room.

When brought to school by his mother he always kissed her and his small brother very fondly. The mother at this time became rather over-anxious, partly because Roy was very upset when Guy no longer accompanied him to the nursery school, partly because she was worried about the ways in which Guy was asserting his independence; e.g., on his first day in the new school, he found his way home by himself. She seemed to be finding Guy more difficult to manage at home at this time.

The class-teacher saw no hint of the "problem child" that he had been; in fact, her main impression was that he was a well-developed child and that he showed very great promise in school.

Examining Guy's record for the general trends in his social development while in the nursery school, it is possible to see an overall pattern similar to that which emerged from the study of the "cross-section" records, though, in his case, this development was delayed, partly because of his late admission to the nursery school, partly because of his emotional difficulties. At three years three months he showed the initial diffidence, uncertainty and anxiety which are generally more typical of younger children and which made him dependent upon the teacher; the defensive, hostile watching of other children; the sampling of the environment and the appropriation of a favourite toy—the nesting cups, a toy often chosen by much smaller children, and perhaps, because of its special appeal



to him, having particular significance for him and regarded by him as specially his own, causing him to resent other children's use of it. As he developed and gained confidence, he began to defend his toys, to make tentative contact with other children and to attempt to join in play with them; he became specially interested in the group of very active boys and made experimental attempts to join the group by hitting and pushing in a playfully aggressive way which sometimes passed over into real aggression. He had the experience of being an "outsider" when he was not accepted by groups to which he tried to gain entry; he also had the experience of playing a complementary rôle when he became a "baby" for two girls: later, he had the satisfaction of being accepted by the little gang of boys to whose play he had been specially attracted, eventually attaining, with four others, influential membership of this group while at the same time being a firm supporter of the leader of the group. These developments, together with his successful entry into the infant school group, suggest that so far as social adjustment in school was concerned, he had made fairly satisfactory progress.

At the same time as these changes in the pattern of his social adjustment were taking place, there were other changes which, while having a social emphasis, were closely bound up with his own personal adjustment.

When Guy was admitted to the school at the age of 3:3 he was reported to have several quite severe behaviour difficulties; the thumb-sucking, the nose-picking and face scratching; the "fits" for which there seemed to be no physical cause; his reserved, "shut-in" appearance and attitude; his extreme dependence upon his mother on the one hand and his unmanageableness on the other; his difficulties in his relations with his brother and sister; all these presented quite a formidable list of problems, and presented a picture of an emotionally disturbed boy. Added to these were certain characteristics shown in school, such as anxiety about parting from his mother and baby brother, his compulsive kissing of them both, and the sudden, aggressive attacks upon smaller children, followed by feelings of guilt and anxiety when the teacher intervened. His attitude to the younger ones in the school during his first months there seemed to express feelings of jealousy and rivalry and suggested the possible reason for at least some of his emotional disturbance—his jealousy of baby Roy and of the close relationship between mother and baby.

It is interesting to note that, on the day he had attacked Sara, he whimpered and cried when his mother came for him, although on previous days he had begun to greet his mother with a smile. On



another occasion when he was sitting on the teacher's knee, Sara's approach caused him to scowl at her, but his aggressiveness was turned upon himself when he scratched his own face.

His aggressive play with his contemporaries, and his success in being accepted by the bigger boys, gave him an entry into a group whose "workman" play enabled him to identify himself closely with grown-up men (e.g., in the pulley play) and in particular with his father. He had become very much attached to his father, talking about him a great deal to the teacher, whereas he rarely spoke about his mother; it seemed almost as if he felt able to let Roy have his mother all to himself if he could have a special relationship with his father. By this time, his attitude towards his small brother had undergone a considerable change; he had become very protective and tender and responsible in caring for him; he also showed the same tender protectiveness towards a small girl beside whom he used to paint.

Looking at Guy, not as an independent, unattached child, but as a member of a family where the ties between the members were likely to give rise to conflicting feelings, it is clear that his initial reactions to the parting from his mother were very much bound up with his feelings about the personal relationships in the family, in particular, the relationship between the mother and baby Roy, which to some extent probably accounted for his own feelings of jealousy towards the baby, and for his behaviour difficulties. It was clear, from the Head-teacher's records, that Guy's mother was also affected by the problems arising from these relationships within the family and that she showed this in her own reaction to the parting from Guy and in her over-anxiety.

In Guy, it is possible to get a glimpse of how his personal interpretation of the events in his life at home, particularly as they affected the relationships between himself and others in the family, seemed to affect his whole attitude to life, as judged by his behaviour and attitude when he was first admitted to the nursery school.

It seems to me significant that he should choose as his favourite toy the nesting cups—a very young child's toy—suggesting, on the one hand, some degree of identification with the baby, and on the other, probably having symbolic value to him as a means of representing the keeping together safely of the people who were important to him.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it was the quarrelsome, rather aggressive group of bigger boys to whom he seemed to be attracted. Furthermore, it is interesting that some of his earliest contacts with other children consisted of experimental hitting and pushing of these

<sup>1</sup> See also James, pp. 81-2, Paul, pp. 84-7, Pat, p. 156.



bigger boys, a rather unusual phenomenon in a child who seemed in other ways to be so nervous and uncertain. Another interesting and significant phenomenon was his occasional, sudden, aggressive attack upon one or two of the very small children, clearly indicative of the jealousy he felt towards his younger brother, especially when seen in relation to his dependence upon his teacher, and his reaction to the younger child when he was sitting on the teacher's lap.

Such indications suggest to me that one of his underlying problems may have been that of dealing with a considerable degree of unconscious aggression, finding outlet at home in the quarrelsome, interfering behaviour with his brother and sister, the picking and scratching of his own nose, fingers and face, and his peevishness in his contacts with his mother which may have been one of the reasons why he was so distressed about "losing" her when he was left at the school. All these characteristics were indicative of considerable anxiety.

Obviously, his general behaviour in school and his social contacts with other children were expressive of the conflict in his mind—a conflict resulting from his own personal interpretation of the situation at home, an interpretation which may, in fact, have been a distortion of that situation, and for which his conflicting feelings may have been responsible. It seems as if a chain of misunderstandings had occurred, similar to the misunderstandings described on pp. 12–13. The parents' view of the new baby in the family would probably be "How nice for Guy to have a baby brother to play with!" Guy's view, however, seems to have been in direct contrast to that of his parents, judging by the fact that he reacted in ways which worried his mother, and which made him feel guilty. When this kind of thing happens a deadlock is reached and misunderstandings are likely to multiply, for, as in Guy's case, the mother cannot understand the child's "naughtiness", and the child cannot "snap out of it".

It is when one endeavours to understand a case like Guy's that it becomes clear that satisfactory social adjustments may occur in a "problem child" only in so far as he is able to achieve satisfactory personal adjustment. This means that his personal interpretation of "reality" must approximate much more nearly to the actual reality of the objective facts. In Guy's case this seemed to be achieved by his legitimate expression of his aggressive feelings in a direction in which they could do no harm, thus lessening his guilt and anxiety and easing some of the tension. The fact that he was valued in school for his own sake, and was dealt with positively even when he was unduly aggressive, helped him to form a different



picture of himself; from being the "resentful baby", he began, by his association with the "workmen" groups, to identify himself more closely with a "working father" and to become specially attached to his own father. He could then become protective towards his younger brother and accept him, particularly when he, too, was out of the home during the day.

Guy's achievement of satisfactory personal adjustment was closely bound up with the relation between the reality of the external facts in the home situation and the reality of his feelings about these facts; moreover, his social relationships were closely bound up with his personal adjustment.

It is interesting to find, during his twenty-one months in the nursery school, that the changing pattern of his social relationships during that period showed the same general developmental trends as had become evident in the "cross-section" records, despite the complicated emotional impetus which lay behind his overt behaviour. It seemed to me that the changes in the pattern of his social relationships and in his general behaviour had occurred because he had successfully come to terms both with the situation at home from which his difficulties seemed to have sprung, and with his feelings about that situation.

#### THE CHANGING PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE NURSERY YEARS

Katharine Bridges, in her study of social and emotional development, found that there were too many individual differences in the children she studied to make it possible for her to describe "the stages of normal social development" in children of 2 to 5 years. She found, however, that individuals did show progress in social development each along his own lines, and that it was possible in a group of children to trace the general stages of development. In her summary<sup>1</sup> of the social development of children of 2 to 5 years, the forms of behaviour and the stages of progression from one form to another which she summarises are similar in pattern to those which I observed in schools A and B, particularly with regard to the children under 3½ years of age.

Professor Bridges states that "all stages of development may be found at each stage within the pre-school period in any given group of children".<sup>2</sup> I have found in my own work that there may be children of 3 to 4 years of age who seem to react in ways that are fairly typical of children of 2 to 3 years of age, and that there are

<sup>1</sup> K. B. Bridges, *Social and Emotional Development of the Pre-school Child*, ch. VII, Kegan Paul, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.



two-year-olds who may regress to an earlier pattern. A regression to baby ways is sometimes seen in young children at the advent of a new baby, when a child who has already learnt to walk and talk reverts to crawling, and to screaming and crying for what he wants instead of making verbal requests. This may happen also at other times of strain and stress, and may occasionally be seen in a nursery school when a child is disturbed by something that is happening near him. I saw this happen one morning in Nursery School A, when Paul (2:4), who was a normally active, intelligent and lively child, gave the impression for a short time of being a rather "lost", helpless and dependent "baby".

Paul, who on 14th January<sup>1</sup> had shown such initiative, independence and intelligence in his use of bricks and wooden blocks, on 17th January showed for a time this regression to baby ways. It was not at first obvious why he was behaving in this way, but it became clear that he was very much disturbed by the behaviour of an older boy who was causing difficulty because he had not said "Goodbye" to his mother. This boy, Alfred (3:8), was lying on the floor, kicking and screaming; he kicked whenever an adult approached him. This temper tantrum continued for twenty minutes, until at last the teacher went to him and picked him up. He was still sobbing, but soon ceased crying, except for an occasional sob, after the teacher had comforted him and had seated him on the cupboard where she was working.

While this was going on, approximately from 9.30 to 10.0 a.m., Paul, instead of settling down quickly to play as he usually did, wandered around in a "lost" kind of way. His behaviour during this period was as follows:

9.30. Wandered in a vague kind of way, occasionally watching other children.

9.34. Stared at Alfred, who was kicking and screaming on the floor.

9.36. Kicked a box; touched a dustpan; sat on one of the steps of the slide, then crossed the room and sat on the floor by the fireplace; picked up an engine and clung to it when Peggy reached for it.

9.41. Stared at some children nearby who were building with bricks; looked at some children with dolls; pushed the engine to and fro in a desultory way.

9.45. Stared at Alfred, who was still screaming; touched the wheel of his engine.

9.48. Crawled across the floor and sat staring at Alfred.

9.50. (Alfred was picked up and comforted.) Paul crawled over to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 87-8.



the cupboard on which Alfred was sitting and threw something inside; crawled back to the engine and pushed it to and fro; crawled back to the cupboard, taking the engine with him; stared up at Alfred, then lifted the engine up to him as if showing or offering it to Alfred.

9.53. Crawled about again; pushed the engine to and fro on the floor; stared again at Alfred, stared round the room, crawled again, pushed the engine to and fro.

9.56. Scowled, stood up momentarily, crawled round again, sat on the floor, showed the engine to a child who passed by, crawled again, stared at some of the children, banged his heels on the floor.

9.58. He was taken by an adult to the bathroom. By this time, Alfred had ceased crying and was sitting quietly on the cupboard watching the children playing.

10.3. Paul was brought back to the playroom. He still had the engine in his hand; he took it to the slide, climbed on to the first step, knelt on the second step, pushed the engine up and down the chute, pulled it away from a girl who reached out for it and protested when a boy tried to take it.

10.5. He climbed the steps of the chute and slid down the chute with help. He went round again, climbed up the steps and managed to get from the steps to the chute without help, slid down the chute, and went on repeating this several times, only occasionally needing to be helped.

In the expression of his face, as well as in his behaviour, Paul showed how much he was affected by Alfred's temper tantrum; he looked worried, anxious, and abstracted. The contrast in his behaviour after Alfred had ceased crying was very marked; he was again normally active and adventurous, and showed independence and determination in his mastery of the difficulties presented by the steps and the chute.

Contrary to Professor Bridges' experience, I have not found at 2 to 3 years the stages of development which are more typical of children of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 years. This is probably because, in observing children in Nursery Schools A and B, I have found the older children spending a considerable time in group play, both of a dramatic and of a constructive nature. There are some of the younger children in the nursery school who may fit quite well into group dramatic play, if they accept the rôle of "baby" in "family play" in the Home Corner, but rarely are they able to show such an awareness of the identifications and ideas that hold the group together that is typical of the older nursery school children. The child of 2 to 3 years, in contrast to the older four-year-old child, lacks experience in manipu-



lating the materials and tools provided in the nursery school, he is inexperienced in managing the social adjustments necessary in such group play, he has not yet the same facility as four-year-olds in grasping the relationships involved in "big constructions" and is likely inadvertently to cut across the ideas which are being carried out by the older children.

Lois Barclay Murphy, looking for reasons for changes in the behaviour of young children in her study of sympathy, found that "when shifts in status gave a basis for a changed interpretation of the situation in which the child found himself, changed behaviour occurred". She found also that the meaning of behaviour depended upon the "total orientation of the child".<sup>1</sup>

Professor Bridges suggests that each child entering the nursery school has "a different set of social reactions based in part upon his particular emotional and instinctive tendencies and in part upon the nature of his previous social encounters", and that there are "differences resulting from the fact that each nursery school has its own individual characteristics as a social setting for the children".<sup>2</sup>

The children newly admitted to Nursery School B (the six who were observed during their first months in the school, and Guy who was observed throughout his twenty-one months in the school) were all entering a nursery school which offered scope for experiment and discovery, in a group small enough not to expose the children to too many unwelcome contacts from other children, of an age range in which the needs of the younger children could be specially provided for, and where the teacher exerted a stabilising influence on the group which made for security and happiness.

Looking at the question of why the six two-year-old children, all of approximately the same age and entering this stable environment, should react so differently to their initiation into nursery school life, it seemed to me that this might be closely linked with Lois Barclay Murphy's view, though I would go further and say that, fundamentally, the total orientation of the child seems to be very much tied up with the changes in status in the family, and that it is this which may affect quite considerably the changes in status in the school situation. It seemed also that the question of these very different reactions of young children to their introduction to group life in the nursery school might be closely linked with the major question with which the present investigation is concerned—the

<sup>1</sup> L. B. Murphy, *Social Behaviour and Child Personality*, p. 191, Columbia University Press, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> K. B. Bridges, *Social and Emotional Development of the Pre-school Child*, ch. VII, Kegan Paul, 1931.



question of the relationship between the objective reality of facts and events and the inner psychic reality of the child's feelings about such facts and events. To understand these individual differences, one needed to appreciate the particular significance of these events for the child, and, in order to achieve such an appreciation, to understand the child's own interpretation of the situation, for it appeared that it might be to this that he reacted rather than to the objective situation as such.

These studies, then, have shown some of the general trends in social development in young children. The value of the pattern which has emerged is that it has provided a picture of the group against which an individual's development is thrown into relief. This has proved to be of particular value in recognising development which was not satisfactory; it seemed that this might be one of the essential steps in spotting a child who was having difficulties in personal adjustment, and might be a useful preliminary to tracking down the reasons for such difficulties, and helping the child to deal with them.



## CHAPTER TWO

### MODES OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND ADJUSTMENT ADOPTED BY YOUNG CHILDREN

#### I. THE CHILD'S USE OF TOYS AND PLAY MATERIALS AS A MEANS OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND OF ACHIEVING PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

In the course of this study of social development in early childhood, I began increasingly to appreciate something of the importance to the child of his use of toys and play materials as a form of self-expression and as one of the means of achieving personal adjustment. At the same time, I found that the individual child's use of toys and play materials could not be studied in isolation, since this aspect of his life in the nursery school was closely bound up with his social relationships with other children.

The need for the continued study of these interrelated fields of experience gave rise to several queries, which were concerned particularly with the reasons why social adaptation does actually take place. Was it the result of particular kinds of opportunity in the nursery school? Did it happen because the situations played out and the feelings expressed in group play were of the kind which were commonly experienced by the children taking part? Did it result from something still more fundamental? Was there, for instance, something in an individual's interpretation of any experience which appealed to another child on the basis of its emotional or intellectual significance and which caused the identification of two personalities in a dramatic situation or in an activity involving problem-solving? Similarly, where there was absence of social adaptation between the children, particularly between older and younger children, was it because there were certain differences between the younger and older children resulting from the nature of their reactions to external facts and events, differences depending possibly upon the nature of the individual child's experiences and upon his interpretation of those experiences? Might such individual interpretations account to some extent for the "out of place" behaviour of the "misfits" in the group, since the personal significance attached by these children to their experiences might not be generally shared by others in the group?

In continuing this study, therefore, I made an attempt to discover the significance of the methods used by young children in some of



their forms of play, and to see this in relation to two questions: the basis upon which social adaptation may take place in the groups spontaneously formed by young children in their play, and the ways in which personal adjustment seems to be achieved by some children.

To approach this study by observing children already used to life in the nursery school, and confident in their group relationships, presented too many difficulties because of the complexities of such relationships. I therefore approached the problem from a seemingly less complex angle—by watching more closely both the use made by two-year-old children of certain kinds of toys, and the nature of the contacts occurring in such play. It was here that a setting was found in which it became possible to study in a different way some of the situations in which social behaviour occurred, and to search for what led to any specific behaviour.

It became immediately evident that, because in these very young children the ability to express themselves verbally was almost entirely lacking in so far as they were able to use only single words or short phrases to express their meaning, their actual manipulation of materials, their characteristic reactions to children and adults, and their general behaviour in school, were the only adequate means by which an adult might gain any real understanding of what lay behind their social relationships or achieve some insight into their personal adjustment.

*Concrete forms of self-expression in the child's symbolic use of toys and play materials*

One of the most fascinating aspects of development is that which takes account of a young child's increasing command of concrete forms of self-expression by the use he makes of the objects and other media he discovers in the world around him. For young children, these objects are invested with a meaning which may be quite different from the meaning of the same object as perceived by an adult. For instance, bricks, to an adult looking at them objectively, are *bricks*: that is, materials to be combined for construction in certain spatial relationships. They do not acquire symbolic significance, e.g., as a particular kind of building—a tower, a bridge, a house—until they have been placed in combination with each other, special attention being given to relationships of size and shape. To a child, however, and correspondingly to the adult who endeavours to appreciate *subjectively* the child's use of play materials as a form of language, the same brick may at different times represent a member of the family (mother, father, baby, according to the size



of the brick); a bottle of milk; a loaf of bread; or a gun; depending upon the phantasy which is being expressed by the child at the time. The meaning is his own personal meaning derived from the significance he attaches to the material as a vehicle for expressing his own individual ideas or problems. Even material which has been designed to present some problem of external relationships to the child (e.g., such as problems of colour, or shape, or size) may be interpreted and used by him almost wholly in relation to his own personal ideas, irrespective of the specific problems presented by the material. Dr. Susan Isaacs mentions, in *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, that the Montessori "long stair" did not so much call out from her children a direct intellectual interest, but rather stimulated the desire for the active use of the rods as "walking-sticks" or "guns".<sup>1</sup> I have often found younger children identifying bricks of different sizes with people—the "daddy brick", the "mummy brick", the "baby brick". In a war-time nursery centre where occupational material for the children's use had been made from empty tins, cotton reels, etc., a colour sorting and matching tin had been made from a cocoa tin painted with three vertical stripes of colour, with "dolly" clothes' pegs coloured to match these stripes for pegging on to the rim of the tin over the appropriate colours. A three-year-old girl who had pegged three different coloured pegs together, irrespective of the colours on the tin, persistently asked for a fourth colour, and resisted the adult's attempts to help her to match the pegs to the colours on the tin or to persuade her to place more pegs on the tin. Eventually the child, touching each of the three pegs in turn, said, "That's the daddy, that's the mummy, that's me; I want another (colour) for the baby."

In Nursery School A in which most of my own observations were made there was, in addition to the provision for experimental play with raw materials, dramatic play, and so on, much occupational material giving the children specific experience in colour sorting, colour matching, in the sorting of shapes, sizes, volumes, and in the use of such material as peg-boards, posting-boxes, Montessori cylinders, and inset boards. Some of this material was very simple, e.g., wooden shapes, each with a hole drilled through the centre, to be threaded on tall upright pegs on a stand. One such piece of equipment consisted only of square shapes, another board had three or four upright pegs and a variety of shapes, e.g., square, circular, triangular, oblong.

On admission to the nursery school the two-year-old child appeared to have little appreciation of the specific "external"

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, p. 277, Routledge, 1930.



meaning and value of the apparatus and equipment provided for him, (i.e., from the point of view of his intellectual development, as such). On the other hand, he was very adept at investing objects with a meaning peculiar to himself and in pursuing his own ideas, even at times to the point of being in open conflict with an adult whose main concern (regardless of what the child himself might see in the material) seemed to be to ensure that he became aware of the specific problems of colour, shape, size, presented by the material, and that he learnt to solve the problems "correctly".

It is necessary to emphasise again that just as older children and adults use words to convey their thoughts and feelings, so a young child who has very little command of language uses actions for the same purpose; one has therefore to endeavour to understand the meaning of this symbolic form of expression.

Some extracts from my records of two-year-old children in school A will show how materials used in the nursery school are invested by the child with his own meaning.

*James* (2:3), on his first day in the nursery school, became interested, while his mother was still in the room, in watching a child drop small bricks into an engine, and eventually stooped down and also began to drop bricks into the engine. While he was playing, his mother left the nursery school. After a few moments of play, James seemed to remember his mother, and looked round the room, a growing panic showing in his face. He murmured "Mummy, Mummy," looked down at the bricks momentarily, touched them, then looked round again and began to sob, "Mummy, Mummy, Mummy." His cries diminished only when he was allowed to suck the dummy which had been taken away from him. A few days later, James again played with the bricks. He placed some bricks in a row on the floor; from this row he picked up the only tiny brick, walked about the room with it clutched in his hand as if looking for something, then opened the cupboard door, thrust the brick to the back of the cupboard, quickly closed the door, then returned to the row of bricks on the floor. He fitted the bricks across the seat of the chair, picked up some of the bricks, pressed and banged them together<sup>1</sup> then dropped them and began to cry, and for the greater part of the morning was inconsolable. A few days later he found a long brick, put it on a mattress on the floor, covered it with a blanket, and sat beside it, patting it, and sobbing at the same time. An adult removed this brick, saying that it belonged to the brick box, and offered him a doll. He would not have the doll, sobbing that he wanted a "boy baby", not a "girl baby".

<sup>1</sup> See also Paul, pp. 84-7.



Enquiry elicited the following information about the family: that there were four older children aged respectively, 17, 14, 13 and 10 years, and that there was a baby girl of five months. It appeared that James became upset when he saw his mother breast-feeding the baby, and that on one occasion he had had what appeared to be a fit which had necessitated his immediate removal to hospital. It was later established that the fit had been induced by intense jealousy; it was not an epileptic fit. Even before these facts were known, it was quite clear to an observer that James' anxiety and distress might have their origin in his conflicting feelings about a baby in the family. The bricks with which he played for short periods were used as if they represented people; it seemed to me as I watched him remove the small brick from among the larger ones, thrust it firmly into the cupboard, and close the door upon it, that he was symbolically representing either a wish (the removal of the baby), or a fear (the removal of himself from the family). His use of a long brick as a "baby boy", and his distress while patting it as if were a baby, very clearly indicated the possible reason for anxiety about being parted from his mother.

A study of the records of young children newly admitted to the nursery school shows that their initial anxiety about parting from their mothers may be particularly acute if there is a young baby at home, since it is likely to be complicated by jealousy and fear. Other young children may feel insecure because the adults in the nursery have other children besides themselves to look after; they feel happier if they can have one adult all to themselves. On one occasion when I was observing new children, Bobby (2:4) showed this very clearly in his use of bricks. He had been very unhappy on the day he was admitted, and on the second day he cried ceaselessly until he found me sitting in a corner of the room. He leaned against me, holding my hand, and his crying gradually ceased, though he occasionally sobbed and asked, "Mummy coming? Mummy coming?" Hoping to interest him in some of the toys, I built up a tower of small bricks on a chair which was nearby; on the top of this tower was a triangular brick. At first Bobby ignored the bricks, then he went to the chair, swept away all the bricks except the triangular brick and a small oblong brick; these he placed together on the chair with the small oblong brick leaning against the triangular brick; having done this he came back to me and leaned against me. A little later, a child running by knocked the bricks off the chair. Bobby picked them up and placed them again in exactly the same position, patting the small oblong brick against the larger triangular brick before leaning it against the big brick. He then returned again



to lean against me. The similarity between Bobby leaning against me and the small flat brick leaning against the triangular brick was obvious. While he was leaning against me, he seemed quite contented and watched the other children in an interested way.

In helping young children to overcome the difficulties of their initiation into the group life in the nursery school—difficult because, to the young child who has so little sense of time, it appears at first as if he has been deserted by his mother and that she may not return—I have found again and again that when new children refuse all other toys, they will become interested in the posting box (a box into which various shaped small bricks may be posted through appropriately shaped holes in the lid). That part of the activity that specially appeals is, first, the gradual disappearance of one brick after another, then their rediscovery inside the box when the lid is taken off. Dr. Susan Isaacs, commenting upon the interest of a young child in losing and finding objects, says,<sup>1</sup> "The child thus seemed able to overcome his feelings of loss about his mother by means of this play, in which he lost and rediscovered objects at his own will." In this chapter, Dr. Isaacs refers to Freud's observation of the play of a boy of eighteen months of age, and quotes the example at length as "... one of the outstanding examples of the way in which attention to precise details in their total context may reveal the significance of a piece of behaviour in the inner psychic life of the child. ...". This boy was a normal child, of average intellectual development, and generally well behaved. Freud writes: "He did not disturb his parents at night; he scrupulously obeyed orders about not touching various objects and not going into certain rooms; and above all he never cried when his mother went out and left him for hours together, although the tie to his mother was a very close one: she had not only nourished him herself, but had cared for him and brought him up without any outside help. Occasionally, however, this well-behaved child evinced the troublesome habit of flinging into the corner of the room or under the bed all the little things he could lay his hands on, so that to gather up his toys was often no light task. He accompanied this by an expression of interest and gratification, emitting a loud, long-drawn-out 'o-o-o-oh' which in the judgment of the mother (one that coincided with my own) was not an interjection but meant 'gone away'. I saw at last that this was a game, and that the child used all his toys only to play 'being gone' with them. One day I made an observation that confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string wound round

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, "The Nature and Function of Phantasy". *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, p. 115, Hogarth Press, 1952.



it... he kept throwing it with considerable skill, held it by the string over the side of his little draped cot, so that the reel disappeared into it, then said his significant 'o-o-o-oh' and drew the reel by the string out of the cot again, greeting its reappearance with a joyful 'Da' (there). This was therefore the complete game, disappearance and return, the first act being the only one generally observed by the onlookers, and the one untiringly repeated by the child as a game for its own sake, although the greater pleasure unquestionably attached to the second act.

"The meaning of the game was then not far to seek. It was connected with the child's great cultural achievement—the foregoing of the satisfaction of an instinct—as the result of which he could let his mother go away without making any fuss. He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself enacting the same disappearance and return with the objects within his reach."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of my own work with young children, I have myself found that these symbolic uses of material may be discovered by the observer only if she is watching continuously and is really looking for the links as they may exist in the child's mind. One of the children whom I studied in this way was two-year-old Paul whom I observed when he was newly admitted to the nursery school. It seemed to me that in his early forms of play, and in particular, in his use of bricks, there was that element that made it similar in quality to the play described by Freud—play which might have some symbolic compensatory value for him.

*Paul*, after admission to the school, spent a lot of time watching other children, but he was also beginning to "sample" some of the toys and materials provided. He had become specially interested in the slide—a small indoor chute approached by four or five steps. One day he had spent some time by the steps, tentatively climbing first on to one then on to another step. Before he could get beyond the second step, however, bigger boys who were also using the slide, rushed past him and up the steps, slid down the chute, ran round the room and then returned to repeat the whole procedure. Each time, Paul withdrew to the foot of the steps, looking a little scared of the boisterous movements of the older boys. After this had happened several times, he wandered away to the rug by the fire where some small bricks and other toys had been spread out. He bent down as if to build with the bricks; what he actually did, however, was to find a triangular brick and a small oblong brick, then he made the small brick "slide" two or three times down the sloping side of the triangular brick. Having done this, he wandered away

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.



from the bricks. It was quite obvious that he was representing with the bricks the sliding activity which he had not been able to manage for himself at the chute.

During his first weeks in the school Paul had a very individual way of using small bricks; it consisted largely of gathering together in his hands as many as he could, then banging and pressing them together. He would often use little saucers in the same way, pressing them together in his hands, then watching them fall as he opened his hands. Anything that could be collected in his hands was used in the same way.

Bricks were Paul's favourite toys, but in his first use of them he paid little obvious attention to the nature of the material; he seemed rather to be expressing some quite personal idea of his own which bore no direct relation to the size and shape of the bricks or the spatial relationships involved. His characteristic attempts to make his bricks and other small objects keep together were so individual and so typical of him that I felt sure that this play must have some special significance for him. One could only hazard a guess in an endeavour to discover what was going on in his mind, but it seemed to me, in searching for the significance of this individual use of small objects, that it was possible to see this play as a symbolic representation of people—possibly all the members of his family (which was a large one) and of his wish to keep them all together. It may have been one of the ways by which he expressed his anxiety, which was not obvious in other ways, about his separation from the family when he was in school; possibly also, at the same time, it may have been a form of compensatory play or even a kind of symbolic wish-fulfilment.

After Paul had been in the nursery school for some time I noticed a change in emphasis in his use of these materials; for example, instead of the banging and pressing together of bricks and saucers, he would put things together and then separate them with great care. When using bricks, he would place two side by side, then, pulling them slowly apart, would insert a third between them. Sometimes he would place two together and a third on top over the join, then slowly separate the lower ones until a space appeared between them and the one on top dropped into the space and thus closed it. He would also build a tower on top of the two bricks at the bottom, then separate these two bricks so that the tower collapsed. On one occasion an adult was playing with Paul; she was using the flat bricks and was standing them on end to make a wall; she was trying to encourage Paul to do the same. He seemed to be quite unaware, however, of what she was trying to get him



to do, and continued to use the bricks in his own individual way. He placed two flat bricks on end with a space in between, inserted a third between the two, gathered them up in his hands, banged and pressed them together, then repeated this, taking several bricks into his hands at a time. The adult found it impossible to get him to build in her way.

On another occasion, when he was using small cubes, he placed two side by side, then placed a third on top; gently he pulled the first two apart so as to make a "bridge" with the third brick over the gap, then holding the first and third bricks with his left hand he tossed away the second brick, picked up another, inserted it underneath to support the third brick, tossed it away as before, inserted another, and repeated the procedure again. After this he built a tower on the "bridge" he had made, then took away one of the supports of the construction so that the tower toppled over. When he sometimes played with sand, he was able to make quite solid sand-castles; having made a castle, he would proceed to break off parts of the castle by cutting through with a spoon or by scooping with a tin.

These ways of using the bricks were, at this time, so characteristically Paul's own individual methods that it seemed clear that he was expressing some very personal ideas of his own, rather than being concerned with the specific qualities of the material. Keeping things together by force inevitably resulted in the scattering of these things when that force was withdrawn; he had, in fact, no control over the separating and scattering of these objects which he had been trying to press together as if he hoped that they might remain together. In the careful placing together and separating of bricks, in the building of the tower on the two-brick base, and in his manipulation of the bricks forming the base, it seemed to me that, while still carrying out the ideas of keeping together and of separating, he was exploring ways by which he could control not merely the bricks, but the separating and the keeping together of the bricks.

It was of particular interest to me to find that one of the objects that specially interested him one day, and which he carried around in his hand for most of the day, was a calendar tab which he had found; he seemed to derive special satisfaction from the fact that, while each page was separate, yet the pages were held together and did not scatter when he dropped the tab.

In the development of his play with bricks when, having very deliberately placed the bricks together, he experimented in various methods of separating them, he had such control over the material



that in the act of separating them he could also, at the same time, sometimes achieve the bringing together of the bricks in a new way. This activity of separating things and then filling up the gap made, was carried out with various other objects, e.g., the doll's tea-set, when he set out the saucers and plates on the dresser.

*Individual response to the challenge in the material*

Sometimes Paul used various sizes of bricks to work out his ideas. On one occasion he was placing medium sized bricks on a large wooden block. He first of all placed a double row of bricks along the length of the block, then, carrying out his usual procedure, separated each pair of bricks in turn in order to insert a third brick between each pair. Each time he tried to fit in the third brick, one of the pair would fall off the block, as the bricks he was inserting were too wide to fit into the space on the block. He tried again and again to make three bricks fit across the width of the block, but each time he fitted in the middle brick, the others slid off.

It was clear from his intent absorption, that he was engrossed in his attempt to solve this problem with which this combination of bricks had presented him. Eventually he reached the solution when he found some smaller bricks and carefully fitted them into the spaces. It seemed, after this, that there was much more variety in his play with bricks and that he showed a greater awareness of the spatial relationships involved. This is evident from the following record of his use of bricks on one occasion (14th January).

9.43. Paul stood on the steps of the slide; he placed bricks at the top of the chute and watched them slide down; he then went round to the chute and pushed the bricks up and down the slippery surface.

9.49. He sat at the end of the chute placing large blocks in a line to make a "car"; he sat on the blocks and "drove the car", then he got up, placed another block across to form a seat, and then "drove the car" again.

9.54. He pushed one of the blocks up the chute, then offered some of the blocks to Ellen who came up to him.

9.55 to 10.4. (There was a gap in the record here when he needed attention in the bathroom. On his return from the bathroom he went immediately to the bricks.)

10.4. Paul built a tower with the bricks; the tower fell. He built another, this time building with the small bricks and using one of the big blocks as a base.

10.7. He built a tower of small bricks beside a large block; he then fitted two rows of bricks on the big block, and tried to make



a third row by inserting bricks between the pairs of bricks. He was upset by the interference of another boy and pushed the big block and the small bricks over to a quieter corner.

10.10. He placed some small bricks on the big block then arranged them in three rows; he then began to build upwards on the base already prepared (three-dimensional building).

10.13. Using two big blocks as a base, he fitted some small bricks on one of the blocks and then covered them with the second block. He fitted three rows of bricks across this block, using two different sizes in order to fit them on, then he rearranged the bricks, building them upwards to make a tower.

10.18. Some other children interfered with his play and he wandered off.

It seemed to me that in this more developed use of bricks for construction in which problems of spatial relationships were involved, Paul's use of bricks was more varied when his concern was with the external problems presented by the material than when he was concerned primarily with the use of the bricks for some form of symbolic self-expression. Brought suddenly face to face with the special demands or limitations of the material, as Paul was when he discovered that the three rows of bricks, all of the same size, could not be fitted on to the block, a child may become absorbed with these "external" problems of spatial relationships; the personal problem which he may have been expressing through his use of bricks may still provide the impetus for this exploration of spatial relationships, but at the same time it fades into the background if the child is sufficiently secure to be able to accept the challenge of these external problems.

As a child, in his use of material, becomes more aware of the qualities of the material and of the "external" problems which it presents, he is likely, if he is developing satisfactorily, to pay more immediate attention to these challenges. When Paul began placing the rows of bricks on the big block in his usual "putting together and separating" method, it seemed that he was using them in his symbolic way; when the bricks fell off the block, he was presented with an external problem which he could either accept as a challenge, or from which he might turn away as being too frustrating to solve. When Paul accepted the challenge, it seemed as if, in dealing with it, he found himself almost inadvertently giving his whole attention for the time being to this external problem.

The possibility of thus being drawn away almost imperceptibly from a predominating concern with problems of the "feeling life" (which the child's use of materials and toys may symbolize), and



becoming absorbed in external problems of relationships of shape, size, colour, cause and effect, may constitute for the child an important factor in his development.

In my own experience with young children I have sometimes found that a child's concern with his own personal problem or anxiety, probably related to his home experiences and family relationships, and his symbolic expression of this problem, may give rise to his first absorption with the materials provided in the nursery school. His first activities may be closely linked with his attempts to express the problem or anxiety (e.g., jealousy of the baby at home), or to gain some compensatory satisfaction; such attempts are in the nature not only of self-expression but seem also to be one of the means of allaying the anxiety and of coming to terms with the situation.<sup>1</sup>

The child's initial approach to the school situation appears to some extent to be determined by the meaning that the home experiences hold for him. Thus, his first absorption in the use of materials and toys may be his method of seeking to solve his own problems in a symbolic way that is satisfactory to himself and appropriate to his own needs, irrespective of the demands made by the material. When, however, the material is challenging as well as satisfying, the child may find himself paying attention to the "specific demands of the material". To deal successfully with such "demands" he has to give his whole attention to the specific problem; if he is developing satisfactorily, he seems to be able to accept such challenges.

*Overlapping in children's response to the challenge in the material*

I have found that when a child is using material in his own purely individual way, there is often the minimum of social contact with other children; in fact, social approaches made by other children may bring the play to an end for the time being. The two-year-old child, using material for his own individual satisfaction in this way, seems at first to be very wary of others; he is still, in a sense, "alone" with his own special problem. On the other hand, however, when I studied the use by individual children of materials presenting specific problems (e.g., of spatial relationships), I found some interesting things happening, which I thought might be of some significance in studying further what led to some kinds of social behaviour. One of the most interesting of these phenomena was that of three or four very young children contentedly using the same small piece of play equipment; this was so unexpected, in contrast

<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter Two (ii), pp. 145-51.



to the immediately hostile reaction to the sharing of toys or materials which I had already so often observed, that I felt it was necessary to seek out the reasons for such different reactions. I found that, when a child is discovering the possibilities of play materials for expressing his own personal problems and ideas and is beginning to make discoveries about the material itself, he may want to sample other materials, or may be drawn towards those things that other children appear to enjoy and in which he too may find some satisfaction. The "sampling" of materials may still be linked up with his own personal ideas, and be "sampled" by him for this reason; Paul, for example, became interested in threading wooden shapes on to upright pegs; this may have appeared to him to be a wholly satisfactory way of "keeping things together", so that when this idea was prominent in his mind it was possible that he might not only be drawn to the activity of threading shapes on to a peg, but might also begin to help another child to thread shapes.

I noticed some interesting differences in the reactions of children when being helped by others to build with bricks, or to thread shapes on to pegs. When a child already using the material was, like Paul, concerned with "keeping things together" rather than with the sorting of the shapes, if another child approached who was also concerned with the same idea, there was every possibility of their ideas overlapping, so that they would quite happily share the material and thread the shapes together, usually paying no attention to the actual shapes used. If, however, the first child using the material was concerned with the specific problem of discriminating between the different shapes and sorting them correctly, Paul's use of the material was likely to cut across the method of use of the first child, unless, perhaps by accident, he threaded the shapes correctly. This happened on one occasion when Ellen was using the sorting board for its specific purpose, sorting the four different shapes on to the four pegs. Paul approached, and watched Ellen threading the shapes; he then picked up a shape and placed it incorrectly. Ellen at once protested and threaded the shape correctly. Paul picked up another shape and this time placed it correctly; Ellen watched him and then let him thread shapes with her so long as he was helping to solve the specific problem which *she* recognised in the material. It then became apparent to me as I observed similar behaviour in other children that if the problem perceived by the two children using the material was identical, overlapping occurred, identical methods were used, and play proceeded happily and peacefully. If each child was pursuing his own problem, regardless of that with which the other child was concerned, divergent methods were likely



to be used, causing clashes between the two children sharing the material. It seemed then that just as the specific problems presented by the material might cause a child to pay attention to the relationships involved, so also when he was using material with another child, he might, by reason of the clashes when different methods were used, be forced to pay more attention to his playmates and to their reactions and so become more consciously aware of them and of the need for some adjustment in his relationships with them.

Some extracts from the records of children of 2 to 3 years in school A are given here to show some of these different reactions and to indicate possible reasons for the differences.

One child was dropping beads into the holes of the Montessori cylinder block; another child came and also dropped beads into the holes. Both children continued to do this together.

Paul was building a tower with oblong blocks. Betty approached to play with him, carrying a square block. Paul shouted "No! No!" as Betty placed her square block on the pile; he protested so vehemently that Betty took it off. Paul then pointed to an oblong block on the floor; Betty picked it up and placed it on the tower. Paul accepted this, and then he and Betty continued building together using oblong blocks.

Dennis was piling blocks on the cupboard; Gordon and Olive also piled blocks on the cupboard; Dennis accepted them and the three played together using identical methods.

Harold was threading wooden squares on an upright peg; Betty also threaded a square; Harold watched, then threaded another square; Betty and Harold took it in turns to thread wooden squares and continued playing with the material, using identical methods.

Janet was threading wooden squares on the upright peg; Paul and Dennis also threaded squares with her; all three children continued using identical methods until Dennis picked up the stand with the peg; Janet at once reacted aggressively and seized the stand. This aggression was not merely for possession of the stand, but because Dennis' action interfered with the "threading" activity and thus caused a transfer of attention from the material that was being used, to a social problem, at a time when it was primarily important to the children to preserve the conditions for their continued absorption in the material.

It seemed that when there was a conflict of ideas because one child might be concerned with a "personal problem" whereas another might be concerned with the specific problem presented by the material, there was likely to be a difference of opinion about the method of using the material which was likely to give rise to



an attitude of wariness in the children, and to an immediate protest when the divergent ideas conflicted. Thus, while Paul was using the materials in his own very characteristic way, there was little likelihood of any overlapping of ideas or methods of use if another child joined him, unless that child was expressing similar ideas or using the material in an identical way; when Paul became aware of the wooden shapes and was able to differentiate between them, there was a possibility of "overlapping" in ideas and methods when another child played with him, if the other child was also concerned with the spatial relationships in the materials.

What seemed to be of special importance to the children at this stage was not the social contact with another child, but the preservation of conditions for the satisfying use of the material. The main emphasis appeared to be the solving of problems through the use of play material; while social contacts *did* occur, they seemed to be of secondary importance and to be subsidiary to the more important business of preserving the conditions for remaining absorbed in the use of the material.

A similar sequence in the use of play material was also seen in the use of the Abbatt peg-board. In this piece of apparatus the pegs are coloured, so that the specific problem presented in the material is that of colour-sorting and matching. The problem perceived by very young children, however, is a manipulative one—a number of holes, all of the same size, which have to be filled with pegs, also all of the same size; the colours themselves appear to have little significance for these youngest children. As an occupation which consists of placing pegs in holes, it is one which gives rise to friendly "overlapping" in play if both children perceive the same manipulative problem. Later, however, when the colours begin to have some significance for the children, and the pegs are used for the sorting and matching of colours or for some distribution of colours in such a relationship that they present a design, a younger child, merely filling holes, would be likely to cut across what the older child was working out, and would probably be pushed away.

One of the constructive activities which often drew together a group of young children was that of building a tall tower with the big blocks, knocking it down, and then building it up again. Several children would sometimes contribute to this and all would join in as one in knocking the tower down. Generally, the younger the child, the more content he was to build as high as he could reach from the floor. The older children, however, often wanted the tower higher; a child, wanting a tall tower, and appreciating the relationship between his own height and the height of the tower,



would satisfactorily solve his problem by "extending" his own height by fetching a chair and so making himself taller. At this point, it was often obvious that the older child preferred to tackle the problem alone, for whereas the younger child seemed to be mainly concerned with the destructive activity of demolishing the tower of bricks and building again in order to demolish, the older child was more concerned with building up the tower, and with the skill and co-ordination needed to balance on a chair and place the bricks exactly in position. Whereas, previously, the crashing of the tower had been hailed with delight, now, if the younger child became impatient and destroyed the tower before the older child had made it as high as was possible from his greater height on the chair, the latter was likely to protest violently and even to retaliate aggressively.

On the other hand, if, having experienced the added satisfaction of the larger crash when the taller tower was knocked over, the younger child was prepared to stand back and wait until the older child had completed the construction to his satisfaction, or even to hand bricks up to the older child, a situation was likely to arise in which, by reason of the adaptation in behaviour in the younger child which occurred in deference to another child's wishes, the older child assumed leadership, and the younger child submitted in the position of "follower", or acted in a complementary capacity as "mate".

In the children's use of simple "occupational" material it was possible to find relatively clear-cut situations in which the basis for the children's overlapping or divergent ideas could be studied. In such situations there seemed to be a direct relationship between the use of the material by the children, the nature of the social contacts made by them, and the type of problem perceived.

#### *Children's response to social challenge in dramatic play*

A similar phenomenon was also seen in dramatic play where the overlapping of ideas occurred in the more direct representation of phantasy; e.g., on 8th November when George was playing "motors" beside Walter, the overlapping of ideas may not have coincided exactly—Walter, for example, may have been more concerned with being the "driver", the one to control the car; George, on the other hand, may have been more concerned with the size and speed of the car; but the expression of both phantasies would coincide in the play of driving the car together. On the surface, therefore, they appeared to be playing happily together because of "overlapping" ideas. When Nesta came up to them "barking", and



suddenly brought George out of his phantasy by thrusting herself into it as a "dog", his immediate aggressive reaction was to the sudden jolt that he had received rather than to Nesta herself, and this reaction was at once followed by signs of fear and remorse and an attempt to placate Nesta as he recovered from the first shock of being jolted out of his own phantasy. It was interesting that what followed was not "overlapping" in play by the acceptance of the "dog" into the car play, but the kind of behaviour that was suggestive of an attempt to make things right with her; this "reparation tendency" was also evident in George at other times.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the examples in Chapter One, particularly of the kind of play in which friendliness and co-operation were observed,<sup>2</sup> were of situations in which children endeavoured to enter into the phantasies of others by adopting rôles that would make them acceptable; e.g., George on 10th June, riding on his bicycle, attempted to enter into Ellen's family play, first by offering a "baby", then when this was refused by offering himself as the "father". In many of the examples of "family play", a complementary rôle was adopted by a child, such as becoming the "baby" for another child who was the "mother".

Small boys seem often to be drawn together in "workmen" play, and in this, as in "family" play, overlapping in ideas may often be observed; e.g., on one occasion I saw several boys spontaneously form a "human chain" to remove blocks from a cupboard to a waggon. Sometimes an older child will appropriate another child, particularly a younger one, to act in a complementary capacity, e.g., to be a baby; or to push him around in a truck or on a bike. In these contacts, in which the reactions of other children are to a large extent unknown quantities, a child may be subjected to many shocks and surprises in the behaviour of other children towards him, and such experiences make him increasingly aware of the other children as entities to be reckoned with. When this happens, some children may show in their play a swing in emphasis from the preservation of conditions for continued absorption in the use of materials to an emphasis upon the exploration of social relationships in play. This change in emphasis may sometimes be recognised by a change in the nature of the play; simple adaptable materials are often used which do not present specific problems but which provide adaptable conditions for this experimenting in social relationships. The variety of such experiments and the kinds of social "problem-solving" that take place have been dealt with in Chapter One.

When two or more children are drawn together in play, even to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 98-9.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 40-5.



the extent of shutting out another child, it is then that one may recognise in the children that feeling of "togetherness" in the preservation of which hostility to "outsiders" seems to be an inevitable corollary. It may be expressed in such terms as "Hey! You're not with us!" or "You don't belong!" It is commonly seen in such a situation as the following.

Joan and Pat were playing together, arranging the tea-set on the dresser; Andy came to watch and was pushed away by the two girls. Patsy then approached and was threatened, "Hey you, go away!" Andy then returned, and in exasperation Pat threw a cup at him to make him go away.

It seemed to me that in such instances of "togetherness" in young children one could observe a form of identification which might represent a step towards real group feeling. An interesting feature of such play, particularly among boys, was the way in which a child might lose his individual identity in a kind of general "workman" identity. This often happened when a group of boys, working together, e.g., loading bricks on to a lorry, was so closely knit that, instead of using their own names, the boys addressed each other as "mate" or "Bill". Problems of rivalry and aggression were then dealt with by the projection of active hostility on to the children outside the group, so that within the group the feeling of "togetherness" was cemented by the unity of its members against the outsiders". "Hey, you're not with us!" was the kind of protest heard at such times, and expressed the feeling behind both the "togetherness" of the friends, and the exclusion of the "outsider".<sup>1</sup>

The devices by which the children endeavoured to keep their position in the group, to obtain entry into or to become reinstated in the group, were of special interest. In Nursery School A, on one occasion when I was watching a "workman" group, John, who had not been admitted to the group, first began to threaten one of the "workmen", calling out tauntingly, "I can fight you with my elbow, good job!" Then, realising that this put him into the enemy's camp, he changed his tactics and began to chant, "Old Ron's on the burning bonfire," trying thus to establish his oneness with the group by directing aggressive taunts towards the enemy of the group—Ron. Shortly afterwards, the tower which had been built by the group collapsed, and this seemed to be the signal for both the members of the group and the "outsiders" to be united in rough, unruly play, consisting of rolling together among the blocks and throwing them about (suggested by the sudden collapse of the tower).

<sup>1</sup> See Susan Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, pp. 249-50. Routledge, 1933.



It seemed to me as I watched the change of emphasis in the children's play as they became more experienced and confident that, just as the challenges met by the children in their use of play materials forced their attention upon the various problems of spatial, cause and effect and other relationships presented by the material, so the clashes experienced by the children in the sharing of materials in social situations forced their attention upon the problems of social relationships. It seemed that, as a child became more concerned with the problems arising in his social relationships with children, he became increasingly engrossed in the exploration of social relationships, and began to make discoveries about the methods of dealing with the clashes occurring in social situations; as a result, the pattern of his social relationships became very much more varied and complex.

*Examples of children who showed difficulty in meeting the "challenges" in the environment*

There were, however, individuals in the group who were specially noticeable because of their marked deviation from the developmental trends of the group, particularly in the absence of this exploration of social relationships at an age when this is a marked feature of children's play. George was one of those children whose behaviour was in such marked contrast with others of his age that there was a period during which he seemed to be a "misfit" in the group. He was admitted to Nursery School A at the age of 3:2. The extracts from the records which are given here cover the period from 3:2 to 3:11. They have been brought together to illustrate his general behaviour and use of toys and his typical reactions to other children.

*I. George*

*(a) General behaviour and use of toys*

George rarely got through a day without spending some time sucking his thumb. This was not simply a matter of having his thumb in his mouth, for he would suck vigorously, dribbling all the time so that his hand became very wet. The thumb-sucking seemed to occur at certain times during the day, in particular when he was sitting with the other children for singing, or when he was waiting for his dinner. He seemed to be quite oblivious of the other children at these times. He sometimes displayed and played with his penis, usually when he was unoccupied; at such times he would stand or wander about, appearing to be in a dream.

October 5. George (3:2) came in from the garden shouting at



the top of his voice and walked with a swagger to a group where an adult was sitting. He stood by the group sucking his thumb and watching the children building with big blocks. The adult spoke to him and found a box of woollen balls for him. Instead of playing with the balls, however, he tipped them into a large wooden box and sat inside the box among the balls, still sucking his thumb.

October 24. George put three small engines into a waggon and pulled it around the playroom, stopping occasionally to pick up other small toys until eventually his waggon was piled high with them.

November 1. George placed some chairs in a long line and sat on the end chair making motor noises and guiding his "motor". Then he got more chairs and made a very long "bus".

April 20. George (3:8) piled bricks on to a waggon, then joined a horse to the waggon and pushed it along. He then tipped all the bricks into a bag, went over to the toy cupboard, pulled out all the dolls and stuffed animals, strewing the floor with them, pushed away a small child who approached him, and got inside the cupboard by himself. He tried unsuccessfully to get Ethel's horse, then found another, pushed it into the empty cupboard and shut the door. He spent some time violently opening and shutting the door.

May 29. (3:9.) George drove his motor car into the doorway of the Wendy house then got out of the car; he found a tea-pot filled with sand and poured the sand in and out of cups. Then, looking round, he said, "Where's a baby?" He found a Teddy bear with only one leg, examined it and said, "Got no leg." He put the Teddy bear into a cradle and covered it with a blanket, then he picked up the tea-pot again and poured sand from it into a jug.

June 8. (3:10.) George played with the toy farm, finding the bigger animals and fitting them inside the door of a barn. Then he took a toy horse and fitted it in turn into as many sheds and houses as he could find, finally leaving it inside a small house. He took a wooden duck from Danny, found a small pan, let the duck "drink" from the pan, then placed it inside the house beside the horse. He let the horse "drink" from the pan, then threw away the wooden duck and again placed the horse in the house. Later, he took the tea-pot to the sand-pit, filled it with sand, walked to the table on which a horse on wheels was standing, and tipped the horse forward so that its nose rested in the tea-pot. When the horse had been "fed", George went back again to the box of farm animals, found a wooden horse and "fed" it from his tea-pot, then went into the garden and threw the sand down the drain.

June 12. (3:10.) George had been riding the big bike, holding a doll in his hand, then he rode over to Ellen who was pushing a



pram and offered his doll, saying, "Ere's a baby, Ellen." Ellen replied, "I don't want that one." George then said, "I have to be the father," and rode his bike alongside the pram.

June 13. George was pushing a small toy motor bike along the ground, and as an adult walked past he called out, "The motor bike will run you over!" He then proceeded to push the bike over her feet and up her legs. She stooped and spoke to him, saying, "It's only a little motor bike so it won't hurt. If it were a big motor bike it would hurt." In reply to this, George said, "Mine's a *big* motor bike: it can go fast!" and he pushed it quickly to and fro on the ground.

(b) *Typical reactions to other children*

November 1. George (3:3) showed great anxiety after hitting Fred and making him cry. When Fred threatened, "I'll tell my Mummy of you," George put his arm round Fred's neck saying, "I won't hit you again!"

November 8. George had put some chairs together and was playing "motors" beside Walter. Nesta, who was pretending to be a dog, crawled up to the "motor" barking. George pushed her away so roughly that she got up quickly and went away, then, looking rather anxious, he called out to her, "No, come back," and beckoned to her. Nesta came back and got into the motor with George and submitted to being patted and stroked by George.

April 18. (3:8.) George, seeing May pulling Molly's hair, intervened on behalf of Molly, pushing May away. Later George pulled Godfrey's hair when Godfrey prevented him from putting the table cloth straight at dinner-time.

June 8. (3:10.) George was sitting in a box in the garden with a pram near him. When May came and began to wheel the pram away, George shouted threateningly, "My pram! No, my pram!" He got out of the box and pulled the pram nearer before getting into the box again. May found a lid which was in the pram and took it out saying, "Take it home." George retaliated, "No, you're not. I am!" May shouted, "No, I am," and walked away with the lid.

June 13. (3:10.) George made no protest when a bigger boy threw sand over him, only turning away his head. When this boy left the sand-pit, however, George took up a spade and, turning on another child, threatened him with his spade and beat the child's pail.

June 19. George was riding his bike in the garden when Cecil tried to get possession of it by pulling. George hit Cecil and clung to the bike; Cecil retaliated by pulling George's hair. George hit



back, then rode off looking sulky and cross when an adult intervened.

June 8. George (3:10), Nelly (3:10), Terry (3:1), Ada (2:3) and Danny (2:2) had found a box of farm animals. They seemed to be quite preoccupied with their own interests while playing with the animals. Ada and Terry were taking out one thing after another, Ada holding up each one as if to show the others, and Terry calling out, "Here, horsie, horsie, horsie! Great big horsie!" Nelly occasionally looked over George's shoulder to see his toys; George himself was quite oblivious of the other children as he played with the animals.

In this group in which George was one of the older children, he stood out as being, in the main, a solitary child, for although he sometimes played alongside others, there was rarely any evidence of his joining in play that could be described as "group play". He gave the impression of being younger than others of his age because of his "self-absorption", which seemed to cut him off from others. It was unusual for him to join in play with other children; his use of toys and play materials was very individual and had the effect of shutting other children out. For instance, he liked to sit in a box and suck his thumb; even when the teacher offered him balls in a box, his reaction was not to play with the balls but to sit among them in the box and suck his thumb. The impression he gave of a "sucking, dribbling baby" contrasted very vividly with the impression conveyed at other times of an exaggerated sense of power, sometimes shown by his swaggering walk, sometimes by the phantasies expressed in his play, e.g., of the "big motor bike" which could "go fast", and which could "run over" the big, important adult, although it was in fact only a very small mechanical toy. This phantasy of the powerful, fast motor bike was obviously of great importance for George, for when the adult faced him with the reality aspect of the situation by reminding him of the smallness and ineffectiveness of his bike, his immediate reaction was to take refuge in his phantasy and again reaffirm the speed and power of his motor bike.

In his play with the farm animals he used to become so completely absorbed with the working out of his own ideas or phantasies that he seemed to be quite oblivious of the other children who were also playing with the animals. Sometimes in his use of toys there were occasional clashes with other children; this happened when another child inadvertently penetrated into his "private world" and jerked him into a sudden realisation of the presence of others who had to be reckoned with; such clashes were likely to evoke from him an aggressive outburst. It was typical of him that after



such an outburst he would be overcome by feelings of anxiety, fear or remorse, and would need to placate the child to whom he had been aggressive by a show of affection or by some form of reparation.

As he approached four years of age, the fact that he was able to stand up for himself without so often showing this kind of anxiety suggests that during his eight months in the nursery school there had been some diminution of anxiety, and along with that some increase in confidence. He was beginning also to show a sufficient degree of awareness of other children to be able to present himself as a play companion, e.g., when he sought to join Ellen in play, first by offering a doll, then by representing himself as the "father".

George was one of the "problem children" in this group, not because he was obviously difficult or unduly aggressive but because he seemed to be tied up with his phantasies in which conflicting feelings both of impotence and power were expressed. He was less easy to reach and to help, both because of this, and because he had not begun to make any satisfactory *real* use of his phantasy of power in his life in the nursery school except in a symbolic way. In his use of toys (real objects) there was some link with "reality" since he was using "real" things; there was, however, in his play, the repetitive expression of ideas which were so individual as to suggest that they were significant from the point of view of their very personal meaning for George as well as because of their real significance in an objective sense.

I was not able to find out anything about George's family, but his behaviour in the nursery school suggested that it might be in the family relationships that one would need to seek for the reasons for his difficulty in achieving satisfactory adjustment. It seemed possible that the situation in the family may have been such as to give rise to conflicting feelings in George, and that in his play, he was both seeking expression for those feelings, and at the same time trying to find a means of coming to terms with them.

In other cases, e.g., Jack (pp. 136-44), and other children having difficulty in dealing with their feelings of jealousy (pp. 145-51), judging by the intensity of the feelings experienced by such children, and by the nature of the expression of those feelings, it seems to be obvious that the real difficulty lies in the fact that the children were faced with the problem of reconciling their conflicting feelings of love and hate. One sees in the behaviour of these individuals and in their very personal use of toys and play materials a child's unconscious use of mechanisms for dealing with conflicting



emotions, and particularly for dealing with anxiety about feelings of hate and aggression.

Sometimes the anxiety and guilt experienced by a child about his feelings of hate and aggression may have the effect of completely inhibiting him, making it almost impossible for him to play or to make active contact with other children.

2. *Bert* (3:9), on admission to the nursery school, gave the impression of being thus inhibited. He seemed, superficially, to be very "good" and easy to manage; at the same time, he showed evidence of suffering from a considerable degree of emotional disturbance. He lived with his grandparents, his mother having been killed in an air raid when he was a very young baby. He knew his father by his Christian name, and called his grandmother "Mummy".

It was reported by the grandmother that Bert always woke early and was very bad-tempered and irritable in the mornings. He made persistent demands, e.g., he wanted to do "real writing" with pen and ink and was very angry with his grandfather when he was not allowed to do this. He was said, however, to be very quiet, preferring to play on his own, though later he liked to play with older boys in the street. Both grandparents seemed to be kind, understanding and reassuring. The grandmother was very generous, often bringing gifts to the nursery school.

During his first seven months in the school, Bert seemed to be so withdrawn as to be almost unapproachable; at the same time, he gave very little trouble. He always came to the nursery school without any upset; he would speak softly to his grandmother, kiss her, and wave back when she waved to him on leaving the school. He was very neat and clean, and always had a handkerchief, which he often held in one hand; he seemed to be afraid of soiling his clothes, and avoided messy materials such as paint, water and clay, saying that he must keep his clothes clean. When he was first admitted, he used to wet his knickers once or twice a day. His grandmother always gave him a spare pair each morning; he was very anxious if she forgot. When he did wet himself, he hastened to tell the staff that he had a dry pair in the cloakroom. This trouble soon cleared up. He always ate quite well, sometimes having second helpings; he rarely spoke at meal-times. Sometimes he accepted the responsibility of being "server"; he did this job quietly and sensibly, managing to satisfy the demands of the more influential children by serving them first. He often slept during the rest period; if lying awake he tended to wriggle and fidget. He was very fussy about his hands; if they were dirty he wanted to wash them at once; he would do this in a serious, absorbed way. He was quite inde-



pendent in attending to himself in the bathroom. Sometimes if the teacher suggested that he might play with paint or water, he would say, "I want to pee." At other times, he would open his eyes wide, stare anxiously at the teacher, and sometimes stammer.

He walked with short steps, head poking forward, one hand in the top of his trousers. He often stood looking around, mouth partly open, head slightly down, moving his eyes around as he watched. At such times he sometimes fingered his penis, then just afterwards would want to go to the lavatory. While he watched other children, he sometimes jumped up and down; if he was sitting while watching, he would sit on the edge of the chair leaning forward, holding the chair with both hands.

When he first came he rarely spoke, and then only in whispers. Later, if the teacher invited him to play with an activity such as water play, he would state a preference for picture books or plasticine. Occasionally he would mention a new article of clothing that he was wearing, or say, "I want to pee," or "I'm not washed." His only reply to direct questions was to nod or shake his head or point to a person or activity. He tended to stammer if he volunteered a statement; his eyes were then open very wide, he looked anxious, and he whispered or spoke in a very soft voice. He only occasionally spoke to children.

He was very reserved in his attitude to adults; his response to cuddling was a negative one, he would wriggle away and ask for plasticine. Sometimes he would respond with a smile to a teacher's smile. Sometimes he stood by the teacher looking rather "lost"; at such times he would accept her invitation to sit on her lap though he usually turned his head away from her. Occasionally if asked by an adult to do something for her he would stammer, "I have not been washed," or "I must wash my hands." Usually he was very willing to do as he was asked; he used to stand around so much that he was generally handy to fetch and carry for the teacher.

His expression was often a blank one. When he was first admitted, he would find a corner by himself, often behind the book table, and look out from there. He seemed to be quite "self-absorbed". Occasionally he would look at a book or would finger the plasticine. Later, he watched other children a great deal; sometimes he would walk around carrying a book or a piece of plasticine, sometimes he would stand near the children in whom he was interested. When he was watching the dramatic play of some children, he sometimes responded to their mood; e.g., in some rough and tumble play, Bert's face would light up as he watched and he would laugh and jump up and down in his excitement. If one child in the group



became frightened of the aggression as if it were real rather than playful, Bert's face reflected the fear and anxiety. He made no attempt to defend himself if he was attacked, merely moving away; he withdrew at once if told to go away. If a child approached him or played near him, he began to look anxious and disturbed and to look to the adult for reassurance. Occasionally he would talk softly to other children and even at times appear to become animated. He rarely cried because he gave other children little opportunity to hurt him as he was usually out of the way. If he joined in with the play of others, it was generally in a passive, obedient way. He never retaliated, and made no appeal for adult support. His reaction to anything he disliked was to retreat, though it was possible that he sometimes passively submitted because there was no other way out.

Bert was what would generally be regarded as a "good child"; he was amenable to adult control, co-operated in the daily routines, was obedient to requests, and struggled to reach the standards set for him; he was clean, tidy and well behaved; he was not noisy and aggressive, and caused no trouble with the other children. The wetting was a fairly normal phenomenon.

There were, however, signs that his "goodness" and his concern about the standards of cleanliness and behaviour set for him by adults, covered considerable underlying guilt and anxiety about "messing" and "dirtying". To some extent this seemed to be linked with his relationship with adults—his reserve with them, his inability to respond to any warmth of approach, his stammering when replying to them or when making excuses for not joining in an activity, suggested some underlying distrust and avoidance of adults. He was obviously doing his best to reach the high standards of behaviour and cleanliness expected of him, but these were so high that he dared not do anything lest he should fall short of them. It must have seemed to him that the teacher was an enemy rather than a friend when she actually invited him to do "messy" things such as playing with water, clay and paint, which would make his hands dirty and perhaps also mess his clothes.

After Bert had been in the nursery school for seven months, when he was four years four months, the teacher began to make a special study of him in an endeavour to "get through" to him. The account which follows shows how he was helped to establish a standard which was more appropriate for his stage of development, and how he was encouraged to overcome his resistance towards any experimental or creative forms of play.

The teacher had noticed that he sometimes watched other children playing with water and decided early in the summer term that she



would see whether she could get him actively interested. One day when he was sitting in the book corner as he so often did, staring across the room, the teacher offered to get him a small white bowl and some cups so that he could play with water by himself. He immediately said, "No, I mustn't get my jersey and trousers wet." She offered him a big overall to keep him dry, and nervously he said, "Yes." He went with the teacher to the bathroom to get the bowl, and then she gave him some little cups and an aspirin bottle. He sat and looked at them, then after a few minutes, put his hand gingerly into the water and poured from one of the cups. He soon became absorbed in pouring water from the bottle into the cups. He had a calm expression on his face; most of the time he looked at what he was doing, though occasionally he looked at other children or at the teacher who was sitting nearby. His play consisted mainly of taking a cup from the box, putting it in the water, watching it float, holding it under the water so that it filled up, putting his whole hand under the water, then pouring from the cup into the bottle. Later he concentrated upon pouring from one cup to another, and from the bottle to the cup, watching the air bubbles in the bottle as he poured. He continued with this experimenting, only stopping and looking anxious when Betty wanted to play at his bowl. She was given another bowl all to herself. He watched her anxiously for a moment then continued with his own experimenting. He looked anxious again when another girl came, then continued playing, until, fingering his penis, he said he "wanted to pee". When he returned from the bathroom, he ran back to the bowl of water and continued pouring in and out of cups; he accepted a small cloth from Betty with which she said he could "wash the cups", and wiped the cups slowly. Mary came to watch, and held out her hand to Bert; he smiled at her. Molly then came and told him to hurry up as she wanted the cups in the "house". He wiped the cups more quickly and firmly, watching a child in the "house" as he did so; then he began again to fill them with water. When another girl came and began to play with the cups, he looked at her, then went on playing, sometimes filling and emptying cups, sometimes pushing the cloth inside the cups. When Betty came back and tried to take the cups, Bert looked nervous; the teacher prevented Betty from taking them. When other children offered "cups of tea" to the teacher, Bert watched as if interested. Molly brought some more cups to him and commanded him to wash them. He looked at the teacher, looked at the cups, then began to use some of Molly's cups for pouring; he also used a teapot, filling it from the cups and then pouring water from the pot into the cups; he



watched specially to see the last drips coming from the pot. The teacher moved away as she was needed elsewhere, and Betty seized this opportunity to take away some of the cups; a quarrel also developed at the same time between two girls. Bert stared at Betty and watched the quarrelling girls; he appeared to be rather nervous as he looked around for the teacher. Seeing her across the room, he began to squeeze water into the cup from the wet cloth. The teacher returned and sat near him, and he continued pouring and exploring other methods of using the cups, e.g., putting two together and watching water run out from the crack between them, then putting two empty ones together. He sometimes watched other children playing with water and watched some boys playing on the climbing frame, while he did this both hands were in the water pressing on the bottom of the bowl. He continued playing and watching at the same time. A little later George went to play at Bert's bowl. Bert looked at the teacher, then continued pouring from the cups. George made an "egg" with two cups put together; Bert watched, then did the same, but added a third cup under the "egg". George made another "egg"; Bert copied him and smiled at George, showed him his cup and, later, offered George a cup and spoke to him. The play developed, Bert showing his cups to George and talking to him; he let George pour into his cup, then after more pouring, tipped his full cups into George's jar. When George went to have his mid-morning snack, Bert held his "egg" for him; when he returned, Bert offered him a cup, then tried to get it back again; he succeeded in doing this. He then became interested in fitting cups one inside the other to make a "tower"; he showed this to George and continued to talk to him. When the teacher moved away he continued to play, and when a little later the bowl had to be put away he smiled when she said he could have it again in the afternoon. He had been playing for an hour and a half. In the afternoon, the three girls with whom he had had some contact in the morning were playing with the cups in the bowl; when he went near, the teacher suggested that he could also play there. He nodded, and began to play at the same bowl, at first rather tentatively, then he became less careful, and smiled and talked to the other children.

Next day he agreed to play at the big water tank. He watched Darrell squirting water, and tentatively tried to do this himself. When some water was squirted in his face Bert wiped off the water and smiled. The splashing went on and he seemed to enjoy it. He began to laugh and talk with Darrell and to play more freely. He seemed specially to enjoy water coming out of holes in tins. He played for nearly an hour.



On the following Monday, he looked very shy when his grandmother brought him to school. She told the teacher that on the previous Thursday (the day on which he had first played with water) he had gone into the street in the evening to play with other children, they had got a bucket and had managed to get water from a tank, then had poured it in the road and walked through it. Bert had been taken home by his grandmother with wet socks and shoes. Bert seemed miserable when he heard his grandmother recounting this, although she did not appear to be cross with him. When he had taken off his coat, he went at once into the book corner and did nothing. The teacher invited him to play with water; at first he very firmly said "No", then he began to stammer something about not getting wet. However, when she invited him again, he went with her to the water table to have an apron tied on. He again had the white bowl and the cups, and this time, also, two small tins, each with a small hole in the bottom, and some jars. For thirty minutes he experimented with cups, tins and jars, pouring from one to another.

On the four following days he refused to play with water and spent most of his time wandering around the nursery watching other children or fingering the plasticine, pinching it, rolling it, or breaking it up, or sitting in the book corner looking at books. On the fifth day the teacher suggested that he should play with water. He agreed rather reluctantly, and then became interested and played in an absorbed way for twenty minutes. In addition to the cups and tins, he had a tall bottle. He spent most of the time pouring from one thing to another, but this time seemed to pay a great deal of attention to the tin with the hole in the bottom. He often held the tin up high after filling it, and watched the water coming out of the hole. Sometimes he held the tin over the bottle so that the water from the tin went into the bottle, sometimes he let the water run into a cup. As the tin emptied, he shook it and watched the last drips coming from the tin.

Again, the next day, at the teacher's suggestion, he played with water very much in the same way as on the previous day; he stayed there for about half an hour. Two days later, after he had been looking at a picture of the "Pied Piper", the teacher asked him if he would like to paint; he nodded. This was the first time that he had used paint. For fifteen minutes he painted, using yellow paint and making big circular brush strokes, first round and round and then from side to side.

It was not until the autumn term when he was  $4\frac{3}{4}$  years that Bert played again with water. This time he voluntarily went to the big



bath of water and played there with another boy. A fortnight later he again played at the big bath with the same boy; they were using bottles, funnels and rubber tubing. His play on this occasion showed quite different characteristics from his previous play, for he seemed to concentrate much more upon the use of the rubber tubing, blowing through it to make bubbles in the bottle, or to squirt water at John. When John complained that Bert had squirted water at him, Bert laughed and deliberately squirted water at John's face and on to his sleeve, and then squirted water all over the floor. The teacher moved the bath to the doorway, suggesting that water might be squirted out of the door. Bert did this with great glee. John began to tip water outside the door, Derrick joined in, and he and Bert became more and more aggressive and rough in their pouring of water. Bert laughed a great deal. Bert had been in possession of the rubber tubing; he left it for a moment to blow his nose, then found that Derrick had taken it. He snatched at the tubing and fought Derrick for it. He succeeded in getting it back, then together they tipped more water out of the door into the garden. Bert merely laughed when his hair was splashed with water. When he wanted to go to the lavatory, he insisted that the teacher should hold the tubing for him so that he should have it when he came back. Instead, however, he had his snack when he came back from the bathroom, then when he returned to the water bath he found that Derrick had the tubing. He tried to snatch it from Derrick but Derrick would not give it up. They both pulled at it, refusing to listen to the teacher's suggestion that they should take turns in using it. Bert pulled and fought, talking angrily all the time, then seized Derrick's hair and pulled. Derrick cried, but still held on; Bert then smacked his face. A bigger boy intervened, made Bert give up the tubing and shouted at him. Bert backed away, muttering that it was "his", then again tried to take it from Derrick. One of the more aggressive children snatched the tubing and squirted water at Bert's face. Bert began to cry and backed away. A little later he asked the teacher if he could do some scrubbing. (He had asked to do scrubbing for the first time two days previously.) He scrubbed for about twenty minutes and then cleared away the things he had been using.

On the next day he again joined children who were squirting water. The teacher gave them a wooden doll so that they could squirt water at it. At first Bert could not join in actively because the rubber tubing was in use. Later the teacher asked Derrick to let Bert have a turn. Bert then squirted water all over the playground. When his grandmother came for him in the afternoon she scolded him and shook him because his jersey was wet. Bert was crying bitterly.



However, the next day, she herself helped him to roll up his sleeves and put on a rubber apron so that he could play with water. He again used the tubing to squirt water over the playground. Later in the morning he asked to play with the "little pipes" (for blowing soap bubbles); he was promised this activity in the afternoon. He played with the bubble pipe for nearly an hour. The next day also he blew bubbles, blowing them at the other children and laughing. He refused to give up his pipe when other children wanted a turn.

On the following day he had a long period of water play with Mike. He rushed at Mike and snatched the tubing from him, then ran away laughing. He came back again with one end in his mouth, filled the tubing with water and went away to squirt it. Mike was holding up the tin with holes, watching the stream of water come out. Bert held his tubing up to one of these streams and let the water trickle into the tubing. They both laughed. Bert squirted the water over the playground, then threatened to squirt water over Mike and another boy. When one of the children was not looking, he squirted water at his back. This developed into retaliatory attacks, water was squirted, and the tubing was used for lashing each other. Bert dropped his tubing and ran away, trying to wipe the water off his jersey.

During the six months covered by the records, Bert, through his use of water, seemed almost completely to lose his fear of wetting and soiling. His messy and aggressive play with the tubing at the end of the six months contrasted vividly with his tentative and uneasy use of water at the beginning of the period when he needed so much reassurance and support from the teacher. It was the first form of play in which he became really absorbed; the variety of equipment offered both in the bowl and in the big water bath led to the development of his ideas as he experimented either alone or with another child. It was the means by which he made his first social contacts with other children, and, with their support and co-operation, overcame his guilt and anxiety about getting wet or being aggressive. Through this play he became more able to stand up for himself, to defend his right to the rubber tubing, to retaliate if attacked. The aggressive use of water by squirting was made legitimate and safe by the teacher by the protection of his clothing, by putting the water bath in a place where the children could squirt freely, and by her implicit control when control was needed.

This play towards which Bert showed such reluctance at first for fear of getting wet was essential to him as a means of fostering his development. At 3:9 he seemed to be a retarded child, more like a two-year-old in his reactions. It seemed to be very largely



through his play with water that he made such progress that, by 4:9, he was able to react both to the water play materials provided and to the other children, in ways which were more appropriate to his age.

It is fairly clear that the typical characteristics shown by Bert at 3:9 were those of a child who could not bear to be "naughty" or "dirty" or aggressive. The shy, quiet manner, the withdrawal from others, the incontinence, the anxiety and stammering were suggestive of considerable repression of aggressive feelings. As he became able to play with water both for wetting and messing and for expression of aggressive feelings, he became more normally boisterous and openly aggressive and without undue signs of anxiety. The incontinence was overcome, and he became able to talk to adults and children.

A week after his first play with water, he became one of a group of boys playing in a "den", and spent twenty minutes with them. He had at various times stood on the outskirts of such a group, but this was the first time that he had been able to identify himself sufficiently with them to become one of them. After this, he quite often stood on the outskirts of a group of boys, watching closely, sometimes jumping up and down as if excited, and when any of the boys became aggressive, usually in fun, he would at first laugh and then look anxious.

During the next five or six weeks, he had spells when he seemed to be very unhappy; at such times he responded to the teacher's cuddling and snuggled down on her lap. Sometimes he spent quite a lot of time sitting or wandering, staring vacantly or vaguely looking around. One day when he had spent most of the morning in this way, he suddenly began sawing a piece of wood just at the time when the activities were being cleared away. He became so absorbed and sawed so vigorously and so well that he was not disturbed by the teacher. An hour and a quarter later, when the other children were having dinner, he put away the things he had been using and sat down to the meal. On the following afternoon he sawed again, this time making contact with two girls. He chose this activity at various times during the next few days, occasionally giving up the saw voluntarily to a child who was waiting to use it. At this time, the teacher noticed that he sometimes showed some defiance, e.g., by persistently ignoring an adult's requests that he should lie down during rest-time.

After the summer holiday, when he was nearly five years of age, he seemed to have gained much more confidence. He liked to ride on the rocking-horse, accepted other children who rocked the horse



while he was on its back, and even sometimes allowed another child to ride on the horse with him. His interest in sawing continued. He often sawed up tiny pieces of wood, sometimes wanting to paint them red and then arranging them carefully and securely in a tin box. For a time he became interested in making "swords"; his father also made him a sword. He carried his sword around day after day, and used to put it under his bed during the rest period. He would become very upset if he had left his sword at home or could not find it. He sometimes wanted a soldier's hat, and would ask his teacher to make one for him. It was when he was wearing the hat, and had tucked the sword into a belt, that he seemed more able to invite others to join in play with him. There was one boy in particular with whom he seemed to like to play and whom he would invite to share the rocking-horse with him. Occasionally he would wander around making lunges with his sword. On these occasions he became playfully aggressive towards some of the girls, pushing one into a corner with his sword, trying to stop another from getting by, chasing children with his sword and pretending to hit them. He showed so much determination in his aggressive play that one or two girls become nervous when he was nearby.

Later in the term he seemed not to need his sword so urgently, and would ask to have it put safely on a shelf while he sawed small "bricks". Sometimes while at the workbench he would voluntarily let another child have the use of the saw; occasionally he would show another child how to saw, or hold the wood steady for him. He always sawed strips of wood into small pieces all approximately of the same size, then would ask to paint them, usually choosing red paint; after they were dry, he liked to put them very carefully in neat rows in a tin box ready to take home.

During the term he sometimes used paint for painting "pictures"; it was characteristic of him that he seemed to be impelled to fill in every space and crack, just as he did when placing his "bricks" in the tin box. The same characteristic was seen when he began to build "houses" with bricks; the bricks were arranged very neatly and tidily with every space filled. Towards the end of the term, however, when his special friend built with him, Bert accepted spaces between the bricks to serve as "windows".

Scrubbing was an activity for which he specially asked, this occasionally happened when he felt frustrated or unhappy; sandpapering wood was another activity which he particularly liked. He sometimes played in the sand-pit, and sometimes enjoyed chalking on a lino square; he used the chalk as if it were a scrubbing brush. He gradually became more interested in the climbing equipment; at



first, although interested in the activity of other children on the parallel ropes and the climbing net and swing, he refused to use the equipment. As he gained confidence he began to use it, at first somewhat tentatively, then with more determination. He liked to hang on the parallel ropes, and succeeded after a time in getting his feet on to the ropes. He began to use the swing, at first depending upon the teacher to swing him, but later, accepting the help of other children, even sometimes sharing the swing with them, and pushing them when they were in the swing. Occasionally he became aggressive over his ownership of the swing, wanting the teacher to command the other children to let him have it; he was reluctant to follow her suggestion and ask the other children to let him have a turn.

He became increasingly able to join in play with groups of children, although while *in* a group he did not always seem to belong to it. One afternoon for instance, some children were crawling about the floor being wild animals, making fierce gestures, clawing the air, and making roaring noises: they crawled to the Home Corner where some girls were busy, and attacked them in a playfully aggressive way. Bert joined the "animals", and became very noisy and boisterous, particularly when the girls ran away shrieking. He seemed, however, to be unaware of the other "wild animals", although, without them, it is unlikely that he would have played this game. He sometimes played with a small group in the Home Corner, even becoming noisy and excited, and laughing and giggling a great deal.

Bert was in the school for four terms. During the first two he seemed to make no appreciable progress, his general attitude of uncertainty and his passive reaction to events being more typical of some children of 2 to 3 years than of a child of nearly four years. As he neared five years of age, he was no longer the very "good" amenable child that he had been; he had become much more animated, alert and boisterous, his response was more eager and his attitude one of purposeful determination when he wanted anything or set out to achieve something. When he was frustrated because of his inability to do something or to get what he wanted, or when hurt by another child, he reverted to his aimless, uncertain wandering, his complaining tone of voice and his tendency to stammer. On the other hand, when he became excited in his playfully aggressive play with others, he seemed to be the embodiment of energy and to derive a fierce kind of pleasure from attacking others. At such times, the teacher felt that he avoided her, not even looking at her. At other times he was dependent upon her and tended to follow her around;



his dependence seemed, however, to be tinged with anxiety. He made frequent contact with the teacher, swinging from "rejection" of her to some degree of dependence upon her. He was now able to hold long conversations with children and to give commands and suggestions; he often laughed and giggled. He had made two or three special friends, and on a few occasions had shown a real sense of "togetherness" in play with them, particularly in rather rough play. He had become much more engrossed in activities leading to the development of muscular skill and co-ordination and in those which brought him into contact with other children. At the same time, however, his characteristic method of painting, his building with bricks, and his sawing of little pieces of wood and careful arrangements of these "bricks" in a box seemed to be his own personal way of representing symbolically his underlying sense of insecurity, for there was some hint of inner compulsion in the way that, time and time again, he used the same methods in his play with materials.

This was a boy in whom could be seen the gradual change not only in his social relationships with others, but in his personal adjustment to the problem of anxiety associated with guilt about messing and soiling and about aggressive feelings to which he had not dared to give expression. The water play, the sawing of wood and the aggressive group play, which he undertook at first with the support of the teacher and later with the support of the children, were instrumental in shifting the emphasis from a compulsive anxiety which made him quite unable to face reality in the form of play materials and playmates, to an emphasis upon a form of expression of anxiety and aggression which brought him into close relation with specific problems of cause and effect, particularly in connection with his realisation of himself as a "controlling agent". By means of his control of play materials and playmates, he seemed to find ways of achieving control of the feelings which had, in such an inhibiting way, controlled him. One has an indication, in a case such as Bert's, of the way in which social development is very much bound up with a child's personal adjustment.

### *Mechanisms for dealing with "naughtiness" and guilt*

In the spontaneous social groups in the nursery school the problem of dealing with feelings of hate and aggression seems to be dealt with more or less successfully by the members of such groups, by regarding their special mates as good and friendly, and their enemies ("outsiders") as naughty and unfriendly, so that these enemies can legitimately be the recipients of the aggressive feelings of the group.



I observed on one occasion, a striking example of the use of such unconscious mechanisms by a group of four-year-old girls who were attending a private nursery school for children of professional people. I saw in these children how intolerable are the feelings of "naughtiness" and guilt, and how impossible it is, under such circumstances, for children to maintain positive and equable social relations with each other until the feeling of naughtiness has been satisfactorily dealt with.

Four of the older girls in this nursery school, Phyllis, Pam, Mary and Peggy, had been playing together for a short time one day, though they seemed to find it impossible to settle down happily together. Suddenly Phyllis said to Pam, "You're a naughty girl."

Pam retaliated, "I'm not naughty!"

Phyllis: "You are."

Pam: "I'm not."

Mary then joined in and said, "I'm not a naughty girl."

Phyllis replied, "You are;" then suddenly seemed to remember that Mary was her special friend, for she quickly said, "Jane's a naughty girl" (a child outside the group).

Mary repeated again, "I'm not a naughty girl, am I?"

Peggy, indicating Phyllis with her foot, said, "*You* are naughty, *not* Mary."

Phyllis reiterated, "Mary's a naughty girl."

Pam (to Mary): "You're a naughty girl," whereupon Mary began to hit Pam and Phyllis to hit Mary.

Peggy then said to Phyllis, "You're a naughty girl because you're smacking."

Pam (to Peggy): "You're a naughty girl."

Peggy, as if to settle the matter, smacked both Mary and Phyllis, but instead the dispute began again.

Phyllis (to Pam): "You're a naughty girl; *I'm* not."

Pam: "I'm not!"

Phyllis: "Mary's naughty."

Mary: "I'm *not* naughty, am I?"

Phyllis, searching for a solution, looked round the room, saw Penelope playing on her own outside the group, pointed at her, and said, "*She's* a naughty girl!"

With one accord the others agreed, "Yes, Penelope's a naughty girl," whereupon Peggy went up to Penelope and smacked her. Penelope made no protest for she appeared to be too busy with the job she was doing to notice what had happened. After this, the play in the group proceeded very peacefully and happily.

In this particular case, there seemed to be another factor of which



one had to take account in understanding the anxiety about "naughtiness" shown by these girls. Most of the children in this school were brought in cars or were accompanied by their nannies. Adult standards of behaviour and cleanliness had obviously been imposed upon the children at an early age, so that if they messed their hands with paint or clay, or made a noise with bricks or hammers, or spilt water on the table, they felt they were being "naughty", since it was obvious that this was how such behaviour would have been regarded at home. Guilt about such "messaging" was apparent in the initial unwillingness of the children to get their hands messy and in the anxiety they showed if they spilt water or sand. A general feeling of guilt found its outlet on this occasion in repeated accusations about being "naughty". The swiftness with which the accusations were repudiated and passed on, and the incapacity of the children to solve the problem or to settle to any friendly play all the time that the "naughtiness" remained within the group, indicated the disrupting effects of a feeling of guilt, and posed a fundamental psychological problem.

Although superficially the reactions of these girls were similar, one can detect in them some subtle underlying differences which suggest that the situation had a slightly different significance for each child. Peggy's attempt to solve this problem of disruption within the group was by immediate retaliation—the punishment of the two members of the group who seemed to be the chief offenders. Phyllis, on the other hand, by a mechanism which is of very great psychological importance, succeeded in directing the aggressive attack towards a child outside the group, though, in fact, she did not herself carry out the attack. She twice approached the solution to the problem in this way; the second time she was successful because (a) the "naughtiness" was projected on to an "outsider", Penelope, and the punishment was thus implicitly directed towards this child; and (b) because there was a member of the group who was prepared to carry out the "punishment" merited by "naughtiness". Penelope, who had thus become the scapegoat, became both the legitimate target for the aggressive attack and therefore the means by which unity within the group could once more be achieved.

Mary stands out in this example as a child needing reassurance against her own naughtiness. The feeling behind her reiterated "I'm not naughty, am I?" is quite different from that implicit in Pam's blunt "I'm not!" when she was accused of being naughty. It is often in such minute and almost intangible ways that children reveal themselves.

In *Social Development in Young Children*, Dr. Susan Isaacs, dis-



cussing this phenomenon in the section on "Group Hostility"<sup>1</sup> (speaking of the "group" in the sense of two or more children welded together by a common purpose or feeling), says, "... once that level of social development is reached which makes possible a common emotion among two, three or more children, hostility is found to be more vividly shown in the group than in most children acting individually." She refers to "... the device common among these little children of soliciting the favour of one by evincing or trying to incite hostility to another.... It is in fact one of the essential mechanisms by which the child begins to pass out of his egocentric attitudes into true group feeling. It gives us a fundamental key to the beginnings of group relations.... Whenever two or three or more of these young children draw together in feeling or aim sufficiently to create a group, they *tend* in their very drawing together to find an enemy to the group, an outsider, one shut out and hated. It would seem that the existence of such an outsider is in the beginning an essential condition of any warmth of *togetherness* within the group."

Explaining this phenomenon, Dr. Isaacs goes on to say: "We have here, in fact, one of the chief mechanisms by which the problem of *ambivalence of feeling* ... is dealt with by the child. It is one of his main solutions for the psychological tensions arising from the fact that he both loves and hates his fellows.... The striking thing about the emotional life of young children is indeed the readiness with which attitudes change.... From laughter to tears, from admiration to contempt, from love to hatred, is but a moment's step in these early years.... When we do see the beginning of a more stable relation, a more steady attitude of friendliness in one child for another, we commonly find at work the mechanisms we are now considering—that of *hating someone else instead*. In other words, the child is more able to love one of his fellows more wholeheartedly, more faithfully, more steadily, *because he has turned his hostility on to another*."<sup>2</sup>

In discussing the guilt and shame felt by young children, she shows that two mechanisms are involved in dealing with the problem of ambivalence of feeling: (i) displacement of one's hostile feelings from friend to enemy; and (ii) projection of one's own bad feelings on to the enemy who thus becomes a scapegoat. The example given on pp. 113 and 114 is of special interest in that it shows clearly both the displacement of hostile feelings, and the projection of bad feel-

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, pp. 247–55, Routledge, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> S. Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, pp. 250–51, Routledge, 1933.



ings, as seen in the children's search for a scapegoat to bear the burden of their "naughtiness", and in order to ensure that "warmth of togetherness" within the group of which Dr. Isaacs writes. It also shows how an act of aggression may have its origin, not in the actual situation, but in the conflicting feelings within the individual, which may, in their turn, have their origin not only in specific situations within the family, but in a more general situation arising from the growth of a form of self-control in the child emanating from the form of control imposed within the family setting.

*Group concern with real, external problems*

As children approach the age of 5 years after spending two or three years in the nursery school a subtle but interesting change seems to be taking place which is not always sufficiently recognised and provided for. Between  $4\frac{1}{2}$  and 5 years it seems as if the child who is developing satisfactorily is less obviously concerned with his own phantasies; he has become confident in dealing both with the problems which he discovers in his use of materials, and with the immediate problems of social relationships; he seems to have reached a stage when he is becoming able to grasp the significant factors in dealing at one and the same time with a variety of both material and social problems, particularly in pursuing some well-defined purpose with other children of the same age. In this more developed group play, in which children are co-operating together to carry out a common purpose, social adjustments seem to occur in order to preserve this mutual interest and co-operation. In such group play there is a more objective quality than is seen in the dramatic play of the 3- to 4-year-olds, for there seems to be considerably more emphasis, between 4 and 5 years of age, upon real discovery, more concern with the reality content of the material, more awareness of others taking part in the activity.

The records which follow are extracts from the Head-teacher's records of some of the children in school B, who became interested in "house-building"; they illustrate the ability of the older nursery school children to maintain stable social relations with their friends while at the same time working together with real co-operation to solve practical problems involving relational thinking.

For eight days a small group of boys of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 5 years of age had been building a "house" with tea-chests. The idea had originated when Mike, Johnny and Tom had pushed some boxes together to make a "den" at Betty's invitation. (Betty herself, just before, had been lying curled up in a big box, sucking her thumb). While Mike and Johnny crept inside the "den" with Betty, Tom piled up the



boxes around them, making a "house". Ben, who had been building with bricks, then came over and began to take a lead, saying, "Put this wood across the top for a roof." By this time, Betty and the boys had emerged from the boxes and were watching the building of the house, but when Betty asked if she might play, Ben and Tom did not appear to hear her; they were busy arranging the tea-chests in two storeys, putting on the roof, and fitting a smaller box on top to serve as a chimney.

At this point the teacher put a book (*The House that Jack Built*)<sup>1</sup> near the children; several in turn looked at the book, noticing pictures of the roof of the house, the chimney-pots, the door and the door-handle. Ben then found a brick and nailed it to one of the boxes to serve as a door-handle. Ben and Tom then wanted to make windows and a door and nailed laths between two of the boxes to make the windows; other children who were watching were glad to help by holding the wood steady. While they were doing this, Dick (2:10) moved one of the boxes, not seeing that it was part of the house construction; he went away when Tom shouted in protest. A little later, Ben and Tom, looking at the book, noticed a picture of a tap, and considerable discussion arose about taps, sinks, pipes and drains. The children ran to the bathroom to turn on the taps; they watched the water running away, and ran outside to find the drain.

The children's interest in the construction continued when they returned after the school had been closed for the half-term break; they made a floor for the house and a step "so that we can climb to the top easily". The twins, Ben and Stan, decided to paint the house and before long they had several willing helpers.

On the eighth day, because of the children's interest in taps and drains and because some of the children had talked about having a "sink" in the house, the teacher put out a piece of rubber tubing with a funnel attached at one end; she also put out some material for making curtains, some needles threaded with wool and a pair of scissors.

Ben and Stan, when they arrived, immediately went to the house; Stan sawed a piece of wood in half "for shelves"; Ben in the meantime, having found the rubber tubing, claimed it "for the pipe" and went inside the house "to fix it". Mary, who had been looking at the material, asked what it was for, and when the teacher suggested that it might do for curtains, Mary said to Ben, "Would you like some curtains?" Ben agreed, and together they found a piece of striped material, then, pointing to the space between the boxes, Ben said, "This is the window; wait a minute!" He fixed a piece

<sup>1</sup> *The House that Jack Built*, How Things are Made, Collins.



of lath across the space and hung the curtain on it. When it fell down, Mary said, "Let me sew it." Ben suggested tying it, then decided to accept Mary's offer and held the material while she sewed. When the curtain was finished Ben stood up on two boxes to hang the curtain across the window of the upper storey. While he was doing this, Stan, who wanted the box on which Ben was standing, said, "Excuse me a minute!" "Wait a minute, I'm doing this," replied Ben. "Excuse me, I want the box," said Stan. "All right, you take it," said Ben. Ben moved off the box and Stan took it, saying, "Oh, thank you!" A little later, when Mary said that she wanted to do some more sewing, the teacher suggested that she should ask Ben if he wanted another curtain. Ben heard this and said to Mary, "You ask me," so Mary asked him, "Do you want another curtain?" "Yes, for round there," replied Ben; "Wait a minute, I'll do the window for it." So while Ben and Stan fixed the window, Mary sewed the curtain. While she was doing this she announced, "I like sewing for the boys."

On the following day the teacher provided a long piece of rubber tubing for the children. Stan and Ben immediately seized it, Ben saying, "Oh, we could make a long pipe with this. We'll fix it up to the top." He fixed one end underneath the top box and took the other end down inside the house to the wooden "tap" which the children had hammered on to the box the day before. Then he looped up the loose piece of tubing on the corner of the box, saying, "I've got to hook it up there so nobody will step on it. Miss X, you watch this one; see the water come right down" (pretence). "See mate?" (to Stan).

Stan replied, "All right, mate; you put it up, mate."

Stan put a small piece of tubing inside the funnel which was on the end of the long piece.

Stan called to Ben, "Is it going, mate? Is it on?"

Ben replied from inside the house, "It didn't go through this time."

Stan called, "Turn it off, mate."

Ben: "On?"

Stan: "No, off! The pipe fell out, mate" (out of the funnel). "It fell out of the sink."

Ben said to Miss X, "The pipe hasn't fell out; he said it fell out." He went inside and tinkered about for a bit, then came out and said, "Tap nearly came off. I put it on again." Robin and Mike were standing by, watching them.

Ben climbed to the top of the house; Stan went inside, saying, "I'm going to fix something in there now."



Ben called down from the top of the house, "See what I hitched the hammer on!" (a hole in the top box).

Stan looked and laughed, saying, "When we finish today, we could put our hammers up there."

Ben called down, "What happened? Broken there?"

Stan replied, "No, mate, just going to get this in." He crawled inside to see to the end of the pipe.

Ben suddenly called, "Get me a box with a gun somebody! Stan! Stan! Stan! What's happened?"

Stan: "I see what's happened; I'll fix it."

Ben climbed down, bringing with him the end of the tubing; he crawled underneath with the tubing.

Stan picked up a gun and playfully threatened Miss X, saying, "I'm going to shoot you, Miss X." He repeated this many times and got a lot of fun out of doing it.

Ben came out from the box and said, "The pipe is broken, Miss X. We could make a tap up there, couldn't we?" When she agreed, he found a piece of wood and began sawing a piece off it, saying, "I'm going to make a tap up there."

Stan: "I'll do it for you, mate."

Ben: "All right, mate."

While Stan tried to saw the wood, Ben watched and then said, "You could bang it off, Stan, or saw it if you like."

Ben brought a hammer so that Stan might hammer off the wood, but Stan finished the sawing and said with pleasure, "I've done it!"

Ben took the pieces for the tap and climbed up on top of the house; when there, he said, "Oh, I left my hammer behind; pass it up, mate, please."

Stan did so, and said, "Oh here's your saw, up there, mate."

He passed it up to Ben, also a nail. Ben accepted them and then fastened the tap on to the box.

Two days later the teacher provided a long piece of tubing and a real tap. Tom, Ben, Stan and Mike were in the "house", pulling the rubber tubing up and down and playing with the tap. Stan ran to the teacher and asked, "Can we pour water in the tap?" She replied, "Yes, if you like."

Stan ran off excitedly to fetch a jug of water and poured some into the "pipe" (the tubing). As the pipe was on the ground the water did not come out. Stan said, "It's got a long way to go; hey, pour in some more water." Ben took the jug from him and poured in some more, then said, "The water isn't coming out, look!" Stan, who had picked up one end of the pipe said, "It falls out again if you lift it up, look!"



After some further experimenting, during which they tried to pour water into the pipe and spilt water in a box over which they were holding the pipe, Ben repeatedly told the other boys to pour the water into the pipe so that it would come out of the tap at the other end of the pipe. They seemed to be quite unaware that water was leaking out of the box until the teacher asked them if they could put something there that would not let the water out.

Three other boys had now joined them and they repeatedly tried to pour in water so that it would come out of the tap. They were unsuccessful, however, because the pipe was lying along the floor. Ben became disheartened, and at this point, while Tom was pouring water into the pipe, the teacher helped by holding the pipe up higher; the water then ran over the floor. Again they poured in water, but this time the water did not come out. The teacher asked, "Where is it then?" Stan replied, "In the pipe." Ben then held the pipe up higher and this time the water came out of the tap. The children were very thrilled; they poured some more water into the pipe and watched it come out of the tap. Ben said, "If I hold it up high it will come out of the tap." He did so, while Stan warned Mary, "Mind it don't slip on your head, Mary."

Five other children joined the group and stood watching and asking questions. Betty asked, "Are you going to let any water come out?" "Yes," replied Stan. Ben brought a jug of water and Tom tried to take it from him. Ben said, "Let me hold the tap, shall I?" But Tom was clutching that also, and called out "No! No!" Ben said to him, "*You* better pour it out." Tom then said to Mike, "Each pour it in." Stan picked up the pipe, saying, "We're waiting for the water to go in." He offered an end of the pipe to Mike, who looked nervous and confused, and did not take it. Tom poured some water in and then offered the tubing to someone else (he had found that he could not manage both the tubing and the tap as well as the jug). Ben then said, "I'll pour it in." He did so, then tried to make the others hold the tubing while he poured the water in; when they would not do this, he said, "Oh, well, I'll do it myself then." Tom controlled the water by turning the tap on and off.

More children gathered round while this experimenting was going on; as the water was used up, Ben said, "Shall we get some more?" Stan and Tom replied, "Yes." Ben said, "All right, mate, I'll get it. Give me the jug." He went off to get more water. Clara wiped up some water which was on the floor and was about to put the cloth away when Ben said, "Leave it there." She did so and Ben fetched some water. Then Vera held the tubing while Ben poured in the water; the teacher suggested that they should turn



off the tap; Vera did this. Ben then said, "Who will hold that while I have my lunch?" "I will," said Tom. Ben went off, and Wilfred (3:7), who was nearby, asked a small girl to pour in water, but she refused. Then Tom went off to get his lunch and Wilfred was left playing alone with the tubing, dipping the tap in and out of the water. A little later the teacher suggested to Ben, Stan and Tom that they might use the big funnel, and perhaps save the water from running over the floor. Stan immediately said, "Yes, we could put it right up there." The teacher said, "Ben, what would happen if you poured in water right up there?" Ben replied, "It would go right through the pipe." He climbed up and said, "I will stand up and do it. Give me the pipe." Stan helped him by handing him the pipe and the jug of water, and Ben poured in water and watched it run out quickly from the tap below. He said, "What would happen if I stand right up like this?" He called to Tom through the pipe, making queer noises and then said, "I can't pour any more through because it's full up." Mike then asked Charlie to get more water and while he went to get some, Ben said, "We have to put the tap inside now, won't we?" Stan meanwhile was fixing a "sink" by putting a board across one end of the box. Wilfrid (3:7) and Dick (2:10) were playing with the other piece of tubing in the bowl of water, squirting water at each other.

When Charlie brought the water, Ben climbed up on the top of the house again and with the teacher's help poured water into the funnel. There was a fight between Tom and Stan for the possession of the tap; Tom eventually took it from Stan, who went away to the Home Corner. Ben and Charlie called each other "Bill". Charlie, meanwhile, fetched some boats and put them in the water; he let water from the tap drip on them, and laughed. Dick played with the tubing, blew bubbles through it, and wagged it at the others.

Nine boys played with the tubing and tap in the afternoon. Ben and Stan were on the top of the house pouring water in the funnel, the others were round the big tub on the floor, mostly playing with the water. Bert (3:8) and Dick (2:10) played with the tin which could be used as a sprinkler, and also with the boats in the water.

The children liked to eat their mid-morning snack in or on the house as if they were "workmen". A day or two later when Ben, Stan, Tom and Wilfred had brought their lunch to the house, Stan called to them, "Come on, mate!" They walked about with their hands in their pockets, eating, and calling each other "mate". Stan asked, "What's the time, mate?" Tom echoed, "Yes, what's the time?" Ben replied, "Half past three." "All right, mate," said Tom.

The following day the teacher provided a large bucket which



had a hole bored near the bottom with a small metal nozzle inserted so that the tubing could be attached. Ben, Stan and Tom seized it as soon as they came in, saying, "Oh, a tank for our house." They put it on top of the house and shouted, "Fetch some water and pour it in." Ben fetched some in a jug, and poured it into the bucket; the water ran out of the nozzle. Harry said, "Look, it runs out." Ben replied, "Well, it wants the pipe in, mate." The teacher helped them to fasten the tubing on the nozzle as it was too stiff for them. Ben and Stan became very excited about the tank; it was filled over and over again. Several other children joined in. They soon discovered that when the water was low in the bucket no more would flow down to the tap; Ben became the leader and kept shouting to the children to tilt the bucket on its side. The bath down below soon became filled with water from the tap and had to be emptied. Ben said to the teacher, "We could tip it back into the tank, couldn't we, and then it would all run down again through the pipe and fill it up again."

The next morning Lenny returned after an absence of three or four weeks. When he came in, Ben and Stan ran to him and said, "Come and see our house." He went with them and watched Tom using the "tank" and pipe, then began to command, "Oh it'll all run out of the tap, put some more water in, Tom; let me do it, Tom." Ben, who had gone to get some wood, called Lenny to help him. They went inside the house with the wood, and when they came out, Lenny said, "We've got to make the bedroom floor; there ain't no floor in the bedroom." They took some wood round to the back and began hammering. When Stan and Tom joined them, Lenny shouted at them commandingly, "That's too long." "Put it up here." "Do it like this." "Let's make another floor." "This is my house," and so on. Ben and Stan looked rather disappointed and hammered outside the house, on the outskirts of the group. Eventually they went off to play elsewhere. Charlie and Tom seemed to have accepted Lenny as leader. When Stan fetched a cloth to wipe up the water, Lenny tried to talk to him and kept calling him "Ben" and asking his opinion—"Let's do this, eh, Ben?" But Stan did not reply and ignored him. Lenny looked round for Stan and Ben during the morning and seemed to be disappointed because they had gone. He went on hammering, however, and telling Tom what to do.

On the following day, some books about houses were placed near the house-building activity; several children sat looking at them. Lenny, Harry, Ben and Stan played with the tap. Harry, seeing the tap dripping, called out, "There's some water in the tap; turn it



off. No! turn it on! On, not off!" Lenny went back to look at the books and called to Harry, "Do you know how to build a house, Harry? Like that, see!" He then went with Tom into the house and began hammering the floor boards.

Presently Tom said, "I'm going to make a garden up top." Lenny immediately agreed, "We'll make a garden; we'll have to mind all the water out of the way; we'll make it all round the house." There was much activity around the house; Harry, who was trying to carry a large piece of wood to the back of the house, asked Ben to help him. After this Ben began to knock a piece of wood on to the bottom of the box, letting it stick out to form a fence. After he had fixed this on to the wall of the house he fixed another piece on to the first at right angles. He had some difficulty in fixing this front piece of the fence. Lenny watched him and said, "Too little, Ben, too little." Ben said, "I'm going to make a tea-garden." "I'll help you, Ben," said Lenny, "I'll help you." Ben accepted his help and they worked together. Presently Ben said, "Isn't this going to be a nice house!" Ben then went off to find another piece of wood for the fence on the opposite side of the "garden", measured it against the first fence, sawed off the piece which was not needed and hammered the other piece into place. He was very pleased to find that it fitted. Lenny and Stan were trying to hammer small pieces of wood along the fences so that they stood up vertically; then Lenny hammered a piece of wood on at one corner so that it would open and shut like a gate, but the fence broke. "Oh dear," said Stan. "Come on, mate, let's mend it." Lenny fixed the gate and then said to the teacher, "I finished the garden." He then said to Stan who was inside the house, "Look out of the window and see the garden." When Stan did so, Lenny said, "Look, Miss X. He's looking out of the window at the garden."

On the following day, the children continued to work on the fences and the gates and Lenny began to talk about having some flowers in the garden. "We have to have dirt in there—real dirt, and plant flowers on there." Ben immediately said, "Well, let's get a tray." They found a large shallow zinc tray and brought it to the house. Ben at once jumped into it and said, "This is my bedroom; it will fit me." Lenny laughed and said, "Ben in bed!" After jumping "in and out of bed" for several minutes Ben asked if they could have some real earth. Later in the morning, Stan said, "That's our house." Lenny replied, "It ain't!" Stan said, "It is!"

On the next day, when some children were hammering in the house, Ben said, "They're making a door down there so we can't get in." Lenny said, "We'll have to break the door down if we can't



get in; we can easily chop it down with a hammer, can't we, Ben?" Ben, Mike and Charlie went inside "to do the bedroom floor"; Lenny and Stan were working on the fence outside. Lenny said, "If they don't let us get in we'll have to chop the window down." Stan said, "Lenny, if they don't let us get in, we'll have to chop the door down, and if they don't let us chop the door down, we'll have to chop the window down."

On the next day Lenny wanted to paint the house. The teacher asked the children to clear up the water first. Ben and Lenny did most of the mopping up and then placed paper on the floor. When they started painting Lenny and Ben called each other "Bill"; they chose red and green paint and painted in a workmanlike way.

Some books about gardens, flowers and birds were placed near the house and Ben and Lenny went at once to look at them. Lenny pointed to one picture and said, "That house is like our house. There's a gate to that garden." The teacher said, "Yes, you could make a gate, couldn't you?" Ben said, "I'll make it." "Yes," said Lenny, "You could do it." While Ben did this, Lenny looked at the books. Later on, he asked the teacher to bring in some soil for the garden; several boys went into the garden to help to bring it in. Lenny went back to his book and Ben continued making his gate. Lenny, watching him saw off a piece of wood for the gate, said, "You want to measure it before you saw it, Ben." Ben replied, "Oh it's all right." Later, however, after he had sawn it, he measured it against the fence and decided that it was all right. He then began to saw another piece of wood and Stan also came and began sawing at another piece. Lenny laughed at them when he saw Stan's saw touching Ben's wood, "Look at Stan, he's sawing his side into Ben." The twins began to saw harder, apparently trying to race each other. They were quite serious, but Lenny laughed at them and said, "Look at Ben; he's nearly right through. Go on, Ben!" The teacher had been holding the wood for Ben, but at that point she let go. Lenny came round and said, "I'll hold that for you. That'll be all right." The twins again tried to race each other. Lenny called out, "Look out! Ben's nearly through." Stan had a little rest because he was tired. Lenny said to him, "What's the matter, Stan?" Stan replied, "I'm having a rest from sawing." Then he resumed his sawing in a vigorous way. Ben was laughing and saying, "Don't know who's going to win yet." Stan turned his piece of wood over and Tom tried to hammer the end off for him. Lenny cheered Stan and laughed, and then when Ben's end was sawn off first, he said, "Ben's won!" Stan laughed and finished his own piece, then he began to saw another piece of wood.



Two days later, when Lenny, Ben and Stan were working on the floor of the house and finishing the garden fence, they were talking about making a ship and about being sailors and living in their houses.

After this, interest in the house declined, partly because real builder's bricks were provided in the garden and the children began to build a house with these.

This interest in building a house had lasted for four weeks. The children who were most concerned with it were boys between the ages of 4:5 and 4:9: Tom and Lenny (4:5), Ben and Stan (4:9) and Charlie (4:7). Eight other children joined in at various times with some of the activities—in particular, the experimenting with the tubing and tap; these ranged in age from 2:10 to 4:8.

The twins, who were the acknowledged leaders of this activity, had been in the nursery school for nearly three years. Writing about them, the teacher said:

"The twins have been with us for nearly three years and we have watched them develop through various stages of social growth; early two-year-old dependence on adults, watching of other children, experimental behaviour towards them and subsequent accentuated independence of adults and aggressive behaviour towards other children; a period of intense social play when they were transferred to the older group, romping, pulling, rolling, bumping, and general enjoyment of physical contact with others; another period of watching, usually of group play, and then determined efforts to join in the group activity and the discovery of ways of getting on with other children in a group; the experience of being accepted into a small group of boys, of submission to a leader, of friendliness within the group and hostility towards 'outsiders'; a renewed interest in creative work, in the exchange of ideas, in making and doing with others; then leadership of a group, and the experience of commanding other children, of having the power of allowing others or refusing to others the right to join the group; a greater interest in making materials serve their purposes, especially in the solving of the problems discovered during their constructing and experimenting; the acceptance of adult help, and the acceptance of other children as helpers and as participants in the fun of making and doing, and along with this a growing appreciation of the needs of others."

In this record of the gradual development of the children's ideas in their constructive and experimental activities, the end result was very far removed from the simple, seemingly unimportant beginning, when a small girl crept away into a box to suck her thumb in peace. To Betty, the box represented a "cosy corner" where she could hide



away from the other children; to the boys who took over the boxes it was a "den", and it was not long before, under Ben's leadership, they were turning it into a house. Within the limits of their materials, they were concerned with a variety of relationships as their ideas developed, and also with some approximation to reality (e.g., the house had a roof, a chimney and a door), even though the children were content at first with their symbolic representation of certain ideas (e.g., taps were represented by pieces of wood nailed to the sides of the house). Whereas Betty, in her use of the box, seemed to be seeking some emotional satisfaction by curling up like a baby and sucking her thumb, the boys seemed to be deriving considerable intellectual satisfaction from their solving of problems in their use of the material, a satisfaction resulting from real achievement.

The teacher fulfilled a special function in this group activity when she brought the practical problems more consciously on to a reality level for the children. By doing this, she provided a "bridge" by which the children could pass from an imaginative solution of problems to a grasp of those practical, everyday relationships of cause and effect, presented, in this case, in the use of the long piece of rubber tubing and the tap, and in the problems which arose in connection with the construction of the house. The group experimentation with the tubing and tap posed problems of cause and effect which proved to be almost beyond the power of the children to solve, and brought them face to face with frustrations which might easily have led to complete failure, to disintegration of the group, and to the breakdown of the whole activity. The skill of the teacher was shown in her timing of her own entry into the group experiment and in her method of taking part. She joined in at the moment when her help was most likely to be of value, i.e., at the point at which the solution to the problem was almost within the reach of the children but still eluded them, giving her help in such a way that it appeared to be in the nature of an accidental discovery, in line with the kinds of discoveries that were being made by the boys: e.g., "While Tom was pouring water into the pipe, the teacher helped by holding the pipe higher." She then led to the conscious formulation of the problem by asking a leading question when the water did not come out of the tap, "Where is it, then?" Stan replied, "In the pipe." Then Ben held the pipe higher and the water came out of the tap. Ben, realising the logical implications, was able to go one step further in his reasoning: "If I hold it right up high, it will come out of the tap."

The teacher's skill was shown again in her appreciation of the moment when the problem had been fully explored and solved, and



the children were ready for a further range of problems. At this point she provided a bucket for use as a "tank". It is particularly important to note that this tank was not provided until the boys were "psychologically ready" for it; all their previous experimenting had been leading gradually to this, but it was not until the boys themselves began climbing to the top of the house to pour water into the pipe that the teacher provided the "tank". As soon as it was provided, the logical associations were quickly made; e.g., when the water ran out of the nozzle of the bucket, and Harry exclaimed, "Look, it runs out!" Ben replied, "Well, it wants the pipe on, mate."

The discoveries which were made by the children as they experimented culminated with Ben's summing up of the whole experiment; when the bath on the floor was full of water, he said, "We could tip it back into the tank, couldn't we, then it would all run down again through the pipe and fill it up again."

It was clear throughout that this "intellectual problem-solving" was of such prime importance that it welded together the members of the group in such a way that they seemed to be identified with each other in the rôle of fellow-workmen, and to be united in a common purpose. At such times, the children called each other "Bill" or "mate", and showed a close identification with each other in ideas and methods as "workmen". In the main, during the sustained exploration of the possibilities of the situation, before Lenny appeared on the scene, each member of the team seemed to play into the hands of the others, except on those occasions when an individual failed to meet the group on the level of thinking of its members. When, for instance, Mike was offered a turn at holding the pipe, his nervousness and confusion, and his reluctance to hold the pipe, suggested that, rather than being concerned with the intellectual possibilities of the situation, he was "tied up" with some problem having an emotional origin. His attitude was very different from that of the boys who were concerned with this "intellectual problem-solving".

In a rather different way Tom also stands out as one who tended to be more concerned with what he could get out of the activity for himself than with his identity with the group; it was he who tended to appropriate and control the use of the tap; he was unwilling to relinquish either the tap or the pipe when he wanted also to pour water from the jug into the pipe, and it was only when he realised that the situation was beyond his control that he found a solution acceptable to himself when he said, "Each put it in." Ben, on the other hand, showed considerable skill, both as a leader in initiating new ideas and grasping new relationships, and as a member of the



group in his appreciation of the point of view of others. When, for instance, Stan was trying to saw a piece of wood, Ben suggested, "You could bang it off, Stan; or, saw it if you like" (seeming suddenly to appreciate that Stan, in fact, preferred to saw it). On another occasion, he showed this same ability to put aside his own point of view and to "stand back" for another child, and in so doing he was able to solve the immediate problem. When Tom was holding both the tap and the pipe and wanted the jug of water as well, Ben said, "Let me hold the tap, shall I?" But when Tom protested, "No, no!" Ben immediately said, "*You* better pour it out." It was then that Tom said, "Each put it in."

This willingness on Ben's part to stand back and to give way to another child in certain situations was most clearly seen on Lenny's return to school. Ben and Stan together had achieved with the other children the building of a house of which they were justly proud, they had also formed a working team within which the predominating feelings were those of friendliness and consideration for each other and of real co-operation. Lenny obviously appreciated their achievement in constructing the house, but had no awareness of the unity of feeling which existed between those responsible for the house. In appropriating the house and in taking over the lead, he caused a situation which resulted in the temporary disintegration of this group feeling. Ben seemed to sense that Lenny's immediate assumption of leadership in the house construction would be so complete that his own position as leader would have to be given up; but besides feeling excluded from his own house, he must also have felt excluded from his team of work-mates. It was this situation that caused the twins to withdraw for the time being and to find other activities. Had they been younger or less well developed socially and emotionally, it is probable that they would have defended their right to the house and to their positions in the group, possibly by hostile or aggressive behaviour. They had reached a stage when, in their relations with others, they relied upon reason rather than force. When they returned again to the house-building activity, it was to team up with Lenny and to work out the new ideas about the garden with him. The impartiality of the relationship in this trio of boys, and the good feeling which held between them, was specially evident in the good-natured rivalry when Ben and Stan were racing to see who could be the first to saw through their pieces of wood.

Commenting upon this group activity, the teacher wrote, "The building of the house has shown clearly that the children's social growth is linked with their wish to create and with their urge to



experiment with and to solve intellectual problems. Their ability to solve their problems, and also their willingness and readiness to create, seem to be dependent upon their social experiences with other children and with the staff, and both social and intellectual growth appear to be very much affected by the staff relationships with the children."

In this group activity of children of four to five years of age, it seemed as if the difficulties which arose were accepted by the children as challenges and that it was these challenges which carried the children forward, provided that they were appropriate to the development and needs of the children. These older boys seemed to be united in their grasp of the problems involved and could sustain their workmen rôles all the time that their interest in the activity was sustained. In contrast to this, it is interesting to note that younger children, e.g., Bert (3:8) and Dick (2:10), seemed not to be able to grasp the nature of the problems with which the older boys were grappling;<sup>1</sup> e.g., while Ben and Stan were on the top of the house pouring water into the pipe, Bert and Dick were using the tank down below merely as a water play bath, playing with a tin which could be used as a sprinkler, and bringing boats to sail in the tank; earlier on the same day, Dick had used the tubing for blowing bubbles and for playfully threatening other children by wagging it at them. For the older children, there was to some extent, and in certain respects, less flexibility in this play with the tubing and tap than in the dramatic play of younger children, for these children had accepted the "reality" value of the things they were using and were absorbed in exploring the causal relationships and in solving the problems which they discovered in their experiments. The social relationships appeared to be subsidiary to the maintenance of conditions for pursuing the solution to these problems—problems which might, in a broad sense, be termed "intellectual", since they involved the discovery of relevant relationships in the problems arising in these practical situations of building a house and garden and installing a "water system". The relationships of the children with each other seemed to present specific problems only when the "level" of one child's thinking was different from that of the others.

Looking at the adjustments made by the children of 2 to 5 years of age in these two nursery schools in relation both to their contacts with other children and to their use of toys and play materials, it seemed to me that it was possible to see gradual adaptations taking place in the children's behaviour, and that these might be indicative

<sup>1</sup> See p. 121.



of "thrusts" of development depending upon the children's ability to react positively to the challenges they encountered in both material and social situations. In the summary which follows I have tried to show the interaction in a child's development between these two fields of experience.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS IN NURSERY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN IN BOTH THE MATERIAL AND SOCIAL FIELDS OF EXPERIENCE

1. *Self-absorption; solitary absorption in a personal problem.* This may include a range of attitudes such as despairing, miserable, withdrawing, defensive, and may include the kind of play which is expressive of individual phantasy.

2. *Experimental sampling of the environment.* This is usually of a tentative nature; it may include the exploratory use of toys and materials, the watching of other children, and occasional exploratory approaches to other children. In this "sampling" of the environment, a certain amount of "overlapping" may occur, according to the kinds of materials and toys used by the children and the methods used by individuals.

3. *Experimenting with and gaining satisfaction in the use of materials offering specific challenges.* Individual children may become absorbed for quite long periods in solving the problems presented by the material or in overcoming the difficulties which they meet in the use of the material.

4. *Social adaptation occurring in the use of materials in order to preserve conditions for absorption in the use of these materials.* The varieties in social adaptation may include:

- (a) "overlapping" in ideas and methods of use, resulting in the absorbed use of the materials by two or more children;
- (b) complementary methods of use when each child contributes more or less equally to and supplements the other's play;
- (c) divergent methods of use which may lead to one child voluntarily adapting his methods by following the lead given by another child, thus resulting in overlapping or complementary methods; or, on the other hand, if neither child will give way to the other, hostility may result, and this may put an end to the play.

5. *Experimenting with and gaining satisfaction in a variety of social approaches.* This experimenting may be carried out by one individual towards another, or by individuals within a group.

- (i) Experimenting by an individual is carried out in such ways as:
  - (a) an aggressive approach to another child for the use of a toy;
  - (b) a power approach to another child for domination over that



child; this may lead to a leader-follower situation, to complementary play, or to hostility if resistance is met.

(ii) Experimenting by individuals within a group absorbed in make-believe play is carried out in such ways as:

- (a) social experimenting within the group;
- (b) group "togetherness" achieved by aggression directed towards an "outsider";
- (c) group "togetherness" achieved by adoption of complementary methods;
- (d) group "togetherness" achieved by identical methods;
- (e) social adaptations occurring within the group because of the acceptance, by the group, of a leader who initiates ideas and suggests methods of using materials and who finds ways of managing the children in the group.

(The nature of the adaptations is likely to depend upon whether the social adaptations are made in order to preserve absorption in accepted methods of using the materials, or whether the methods of using the materials are adapted in order to preserve friendly relations within the group.)

6. *Solitary "intellectual" absorption in external problems presented by the materials.* Individual children absorbed in such problems seem to need to preserve the conditions for such absorption; any social adaptations which occur may be subsidiary to the use of the material, since they are usually intended to preserve the conditions for working out the problem. Hostility and aggression may be likely to occur when a child suffers interference or interruption in working out his own solution to the problem.

7. *Group absorption in an external real problem, i.e., involving two or more children.* This necessitates the adaptation of individual methods in pursuing some well-defined purpose towards which the efforts of the group are directed. The children involved in such group efforts are usually the older ones in the group; there is generally an accepted leader, though individuals are likely both to use their own initiative, and, by reason of their own special contribution, to establish their own position in the group.

Looking at the development of these young children, not merely on the basis of their chronological maturation and advance, but on the basis of the interaction between a child's adjustment to the reality in his emotional life and to reality in external situations, it was possible to see in the developmental process how a child found expression in more and more complex forms of play, as he became increasingly able to grasp the relationships involved, and to pay



attention to the external reality of his experiences, as well as, at the same time, coming to terms with the problems of his emotional life. In a child in whom emotional stress was very great, however, whose attention seemed to be directed in upon himself, this capacity to deal with increasingly complex relationships in the material which he might use was likely to be held up, because he was concerned much more with finding some means of expressing and resolving his own personal problems. In certain of these cases, I found that development was retarded, and the forms of self-expression were likely either to be more primitive or to be inhibited altogether.

It will be obvious from the material in these chapters that it is not enough to look at the immediate situations in the nursery school to find the clues to the difficulties, for there one is seeing, in the child's reactions to specific situations, the effect upon him of other major influences. Comparing those cases where nothing was known of the home and family with those where something was known of the relationships within the home, the clue obviously lay here, for it was possible to understand more surely the individual's problems when his life in school was directly linked with his life in his own home, than when nothing was known about the home and family.

It appeared, therefore, that the factors most likely to be responsible for influencing or even determining a child's behaviour in the nursery school were those of the personal relationships in the family, the effect of these upon the child, and, in particular, the personal significance for him of these relationships. The child's development seemed to be very much tied up with his interpretation of the relationships in the home; it was, therefore, in her understanding of a child's feelings about these relationships that the teacher might find clues for helping him.

## II. THE IMPACT UPON YOUNG CHILDREN OF THE FAMILY SITUATION AS SEEN IN THEIR BEHAVIOUR IN THE NURSERY SCHOOL

During my many years of experience in helping "new admissions" to adjust to school life, I have found that the individual child's reaction to parting from his mother has to be understood in terms of the personal meaning for him of this change in his life, and that this meaning has its roots in the personal relationships within the family. It was thus necessary in studying the social development of young children as one aspect of their personal adjustment, not only to study their immediate relationships in the nursery school, but to see this aspect of their development against the background of their personal relationships within the family.

Up to the time of his admission to the nursery school, the child's



most important relationships have been formed within the family and have their own special significance for him. The circumstances within the family, the nature of the relationships between mother and child and between other members of the family, his position in the family, his relationships with his brothers and sisters, and the particular significance which all these relationships hold for him, not only affect his behaviour within the family but are found to affect his first approaches to the nursery school situation.

The effect upon the mother herself of the parting from her child has to be taken into account if the child's first reactions to group life outside the home are to be understood. Many mothers, convinced that nursery school life is going to benefit their children's development, help their children to approach this new adventure with confidence. As one watches the children arriving at a nursery school, one is struck by the confident bearing of the majority of the children, and the interest and pleasure shown by the parents. There are some children, however, who obviously find it difficult to make the transition from home to school, and it is equally obvious that there are mothers who also find it difficult to accept this change, and to leave their children in the care of others. A mother who is over-possessive and over-protective may herself be very much disturbed and upset at parting from her child; she may communicate her distress to him by repeated kisses and farewells and by reiterated remarks such as, "You won't cry for Mummy, will you?" She may in such ways convey to him that beneath her outward concern that he should not cry is the expectation that, without her, he is bound to cry; underlying this, there may even be a hint that she would feel rather hurt if he did not cry. If he enjoys himself without his mother, he may feel guilty about it and may be liable to burst into tears when his mother arrives in the afternoon, as if to prove to her that her concern for him was justified.

A mother who gives the impression that she is glad to get rid of her child for a few hours may convey to him the feeling that he is not wanted, and this may arouse in him an underlying fear that she may desert him altogether. When the mother wants to hurry away, he is likely to cling to her or to react violently against the separation. Where there is a tangible reason for the child feeling "unwanted", as may happen when the mother's time and attention are taken up with the "new baby", or with younger children in the family, who are felt by the older child to be in undisputed possession of the mother while he is at school, the older child's adjustment to school life may be long-drawn-out and difficult, primarily because of his inability to deal satisfactorily with his feelings of jealousy.



In some children, such feelings may give rise to a sense of insecurity and inadequacy; in others, to various kinds of uncontrollable behaviour. Thus, when a mother brings her child to school, she may be worried by a secret fear that he is not "normal"; she may have a sense of her own helplessness and ineffectiveness in dealing with him, and feel over-anxious about his behaviour when he is away from her; she may be afraid of "losing face" if the child is uncontrollable when he is in the care of other people; she may feel distressed and guilty if other people find him easy to manage in contrast to her own difficulty in controlling him.

In their attempts to deal with such difficulties the parents may become ambivalent in attitude and their methods inconsistent and conflicting, thus inevitably giving rise to feelings within the child of uncertainty and insecurity. Inconsistencies in the management of children, which may occur when parents feel helpless and bewildered, may inadvertently cause a child to feel unduly powerful because of the ease with which he is able to sway his parents, e.g., in getting the things he wants, or by obstinacy and lack of co-operation in such situations as meal-times, in the training in habits of cleanliness, and in the bed-time procedure. In other cases, a child's sense of power may be expressed in unexpected outbursts, e.g., in the form of temper tantrums or in acts of defiance; or he may adopt a persistently demanding attitude accompanied by whining and crying when his demands are not met, or he may resort to such conflicting forms of behaviour as to suggest that he is torn by conflicting feelings towards his parents.

These difficulties, reported by parents as presenting problems in the home, are often by no means as apparent in the nursery school, except in a small number of cases, nor, if they are apparent, are they necessarily likely to persist. This, to some extent, may be accounted for by the fact that it is not usual for the same degree of emotional tension to exist between teacher and child as may exist between parent and child.

Many of the difficulties which seem to parents to be likely to become long-standing problems and which not only stem from but give rise to emotional tension, are in fact difficulties which may be of comparatively short duration, occurring and passing away in the normal course of development. It is, however, a fact that many of these difficulties in personal relationships are found to arise from and be aggravated by the strain and stress under which some families live because of problems of unsatisfactory housing accommodation, of overcrowding, of unhappy marital relationships, of ill-health, or of various other family difficulties. It is for reasons such



as these that many children are admitted to nursery schools.

On the other hand, difficulties in the management of young children occur even in homes where the material and psychological conditions appear to be good. Dr. Isaacs, commenting upon such difficulties in her book, *Troubles of Children and Parents*, writes: "Parents have many problems. . . . Many of these problems are transient and normal, however trying to the parents they may be. They pass away with sensible handling and with the further development of the child. Worried young parents seldom realise this. It is often a great help to them to learn how frequent and typical such happenings are in the developing child. Often the mere lessening of anxiety in the parent through the knowledge that the early years of childhood are bound to have such storms and crises will do much to ease the difficulties of the parents, and hence of the children."<sup>1</sup>

To appreciate the impact of the family situation upon a young child, something more is needed than an objective study of its immediate and obvious effects as seen in the child's behaviour. Something more is needed than an adherence to an adult's standpoint from which a child's behaviour may be judged merely on moral grounds or on grounds of convenience rather than in terms of real understanding, particularly if the behaviour is predominantly of an aggressive or destructive nature. To achieve that understanding of the behaviour by which young children express the significance for them of the family situation, it is necessary to become subjectively aware of what lies behind such self-expression by a sympathetic identification with the child. One may thus achieve a sensitivity towards his feeling-life, and an intuitive acceptance of his point of view, even though he may express his point of view in difficult behaviour.

One of the most important conditions for this kind of subjective grasp of a situation (i.e., the situation as seen by the child) is the necessity for appreciating and understanding some of the ways in which young children express themselves. With their command of language at a minimum, they have to find ways of expressing needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings, other than through the medium of language, and use has to be made by them for such self-expression, of any materials available. A child may thus use his own primitive resources through the medium of his own body, as a means of expressing himself; e.g., he makes violent use of it in a temper tantrum. In the nursery school there are toys which may be invested by the child with his own meaning and used by him as symbols to represent the people who arouse conflicting feelings within him; dolls, for example, may be smacked, kicked, or thrown away, or

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *Troubles of Children and Parents*, Methuen, 1948.



loved and cuddled, such use often giving some indication of the conflicting feelings about people which are experienced by young children.

*Evidence in young children of conflicting feelings*

In the study of the children's first reactions to group life in Nursery School A, it was sometimes possible to observe, in a child's behaviour, the impact upon him of the family situation, and to gain by this means some appreciation of the significance for him of this situation. This will already have been apparent in some of the examples already given. In the example which follows there is evidence of the effect upon a child of the conflict between his feelings of love and hate and of his very great need to be understood.

*Jack, 3:3 to 3:4.*

Jack was admitted to the nursery school at the age of three years three months. The records which were kept during his first few weeks in the nursery school show how he revealed this conflict.

October 7. At tea-time, Jack was worrying a little girl by touching her. He was moved to another place. In a temper, he went back to his original place and threw himself on the floor behind his chair. He refused to get into his chair or to take the bread and butter which was offered to him. Although he ignored it each time it was offered, he was upset at having no bread and butter. Eventually he was put into a chair by an adult and he drank his milk. After tea, he was continually quarrelling with other children, snatching their toys or screaming if anyone touched him. When his sister came to take him home, he was again upset at having to give up a toy; he stamped and scowled and withdrew into a corner.

October 12. Len had been playing with the horse on wheels. Jack took it away from him and shut it inside the cupboard, then opened the door, got right inside the cupboard with the horse and shut the door. After a while he pushed open the door and sat beside the horse, looking out into the room; he crawled out of the cupboard and sat playing with the horse's tail, then again got inside the cupboard, found a rag, and dusted the horse. He was called to have his milk while he was doing this, but paid no heed at first. After having his milk he played on the rocking-horse.

October 17. Jack was standing sulkily by the fire when suddenly his eyes lighted on the cradle and he rushed over to it. He put two or three dolls into the cradle and covered them up; he wiped a doll's nose with a piece of rag and then his own with a handkerchief. He threw away the rag, poked a doll with a pencil, sent away two



girls who wanted to play with him, found another doll and inspected it, then hit the dolls and threw them away.

October 18. Len was playing with the horse on wheels. Jack tried to get it, but, not succeeding, snatched a box from one of the tables and looked round to see whether he would be challenged. (This horse was one of his favourite toys.) After this he sat alone in front of the fire till his chair was taken away by Anne.

October 19. Jack collected several stuffed animals and showed one of them to two adults. Later he climbed on the rocking-horse, holding a doll in his arms; he cuddled the doll then threw it away. Later in the day he asserted his independence by being different from the other children, sitting apart from them during the singing and playing of nursery rhymes, going off to build with bricks when all the others were playing together, and finally running away into the garden. He stayed there till he was brought in by an adult.

October 24. Jack was playing with a table, climbing on and jumping off, then looking round for approval. He seemed to be pleased with his achievement and practised it over and over again. He tried to pick up a bed that had slipped over, touched Jessica who was standing near, then returned again to the table and stood looking out into the garden. He found a toy donkey and pulled it along, then put it on the table as if to make it jump off. He climbed on to the table and stood there stretching up his hands; he appeared to be pleased that Lionel was imitating him. Soon afterwards he was given a hammer which he used for some time, hammering nails into wood; he worked busily and purposefully at this. A little later he put down the hammer and ran over to the fire, sucking a stick, then, seeing the horse on wheels, he suddenly pounced on it and wheeled it about the room and out into the playground. When Len reached out for the horse, Jack immediately gave it to him. He then went to the rocking-horse and spent some time on it.

During the afternoon rest period he had had a doll in bed with him; when he got up he carried it around, then banged it on the table. A little later he put it round his neck as if giving it a pick-a-back. At tea-time he seated himself alone at the table where the food had been placed. Sidney came and sat beside him and together they played in a disorderly way, jumping up and down and deliberately falling out of their chairs. During grace, Jack pretended to drink from the jug of milk, then laughed with Sidney when they were both removed from the table. The other children were excited for some reason and were stamping their feet on the floor; Jack and Sidney joined in with this and continued doing so after the adult had said "No" to them. They stopped, however, when she said that



no biscuits would come to those who made a noise.

October 25. Jack was talking to Sidney and playing with him. Jack had a small horse on which he pretended to ride; Sidney, who was near him, had a waggon, Jack put his horse in Sidney's waggon and they played together swinging the horse to and fro. The adult called the children to have their milk, and while they were waiting, Jack, who was sitting next to Jessica (one of the youngest children in the nursery), began to play with Jessica, patting her and playing a kind of peep-bo game with her as he might with a baby. Jessica laughed, but made no other active response. After Jack had had his milk he saw Lionel standing by the rocking-horse and shouted aggressively at him and then tried to move the horse. Lionel shouted and cried in protest. An adult came to Lionel's aid and lifted him on to the horse; Jack resented this and began pushing the horse, first from behind, then, standing on the table, with his feet, in this way teasing Lionel and making him scream. Shortly afterwards he regained possession of the horse. He put some bricks into a basket, then "fed" the horse with one brick at a time, taking each brick back to the table after the horse had "eaten". He tried very hard to put the basket on the horse's head, putting the handles over the ears.

At dinner-time he wanted to be a server and was very upset because he was not chosen. He refused the rusk that was offered to him, then cried in self-pity and rage and threw away his handkerchief. He recovered when no notice was taken of his behaviour and ate the plate of dinner which was given to him.

October 26. Some of the children were crawling around being "dogs". Jack joined in with this play, barking loudly and crawling around the room. He crawled over to the house which Henry had built but was forced by Henry to go away. Then while Sidney crawled around, Jack followed, holding Sidney's overall. A little later he went over to the rocking-horse with which another child was playing, pushed the child away, and then patted and rocked the horse. After a short time, he left the rocking-horse and found the horse on wheels and pulled it around. He took it to the fireplace where there was a push-cart, lifted the horse into the cart to give it a ride, then folded the cart. He tried unsuccessfully to open the cart again, then, as if worried about what he had done, hid it under the table, then pushed the horse under another table. Later he went back to this horse and walked around with it. He then picked up three cups, showed them to an adult and placed them on a little stool. He then wrapped the horse in a blanket and carried it to an adult to show it to her.

When he got up after his rest, he sat for some time by the fire



gazing intently at a picture of the Virgin and Child. Later in the afternoon, he and Sidney found a jointed wooden bird and they spent some time playing with it at the table. As soon as they became expert in getting it to move, they became rough and banged the table to and fro, jerking the wooden bird on the table.

When the other children sat down for tea, Jack and Sidney ran outside and climbed on the Jungle Gym, then looked round to see whether the teacher was following them. Sidney fell and came back into the room crying, but Jack did not come in till some time later, then he stood apart while the others were singing but sat down when the food was brought round. Jack sat beside a visitor who was sitting with the children, and kept pushing, touching and hitting her, turning every so often to laugh at the girl who was sitting next to him.

November 1. Jack wandered for a while from one thing to another, then went to the rocking-horse on which a girl was riding, and shouted aggressively and began to rock her violently, trying to get her off. The girl, becoming frightened, got off the horse and ran away. Jack climbed on the horse and rocked himself, then got off, stood beside the horse and rocked it, "fed" it with a small pillow, threw the pillow away, "fed" it with a "Mickey Mouse", then put the "Mickey Mouse" on the horse's back and rocked it; after this he threw the mouse away and then fed the horse with other objects. He climbed about on the horse, then ran for a small mop and began to hit the horse with the mop, to poke the end of the stick into the horse's mouth, and to push the horse with the stick. He was then taken away to have his milk.

When he returned to the horse he found George on its back. (George, a rather pale, plump child, was wearing a pink overall.) Jack tried to get George off in various ways. He pushed the horse to try to get George off its back, he smacked George, then got the mop and hit him; finally, he kicked the horse and pushed it violently. Sidney also came and pushed George with the mop. As he was unable to gain possession, Jack went off, leaving George on the horse. Jack immediately went to the toy cupboard, took out a pink stuffed pig, also two smaller animals which he put on the pig's back. He played with a giraffe, twisting its long neck; he sent away other children when they came near. He then put all the animals back into the cupboard and got inside with them; while in there he played with the giraffe, then brought it out of the cupboard and tried to sit on its back. He picked up the pig again, then suddenly threw it on the floor and stamped on it, making it squeak. He then stood on it, jumped up and down on it, and walked on it. When Godfrey approached the cupboard, Jack sent him away, then took out a toy



dog, played with it and stamped on it. He threw the pig back into the cupboard and picked up a toy lion. Then he pulled the pig out by its nose, threw the lion back into the cupboard and again stamped on the pig. He allowed one of the twins to come and stamp with him. He kicked the pig into the cupboard, then took it out again and put it into Ruth's push-cart. He hit the pig, then put a pillow behind its head, found some coverlets and put them right over the pig's head, then put a small Teddy bear under the coverlets. He took the push-cart from Ruth, wrapped the Teddy bear in the coverlets, carried it in one arm and then went to the bathroom, pulling the pram behind him. On his return, his face lit up when he saw that the rocking-horse was unoccupied. He put a coverlet on the horse's back and put the Teddy bear on the horse, then he threw the bear away and ran back to the bathroom. He came back a little later, got a chair, climbed on to the horse's back and rode backwards on it.

Some time later he went back to the cupboard and, sitting nearly inside the cupboard, played with the big stuffed frog, rocking it, then walking it along the floor by holding its feet. He then got right inside the cupboard, and moved the toys until, finding a small stuffed elephant, he tried to put the big pig on the small elephant's back. Finally he put all the animals back into the cupboard and shut the door.

November 2. Jack had a new horse on wheels and was standing quietly by the cupboard pulling the horse along. Beside the horse were a small toy man and a rabbit; they were placed so that they appeared to be standing looking up at the horse. Jack pulled the horse about by its chain for some time, then, seeing a row of bricks on the floor, tried to make the horse move along it as if it were a road.

The general picture of Jack's behaviour during his first three or four weeks in the nursery school may be summed up as follows:

Jack spent much of the time wandering about the room and from one thing to another; he seldom settled for long except when he played with the rocking-horse and with the soft toys in the cupboard. Superficially, he seemed at times to be self-willed, bad-tempered and sulky, even sometimes refusing his dinner or a favourite toy which was offered. At such times he appeared quarrelsome and selfish, refusing to allow other children to share or to take turns with his toys; his possessiveness was particularly evident in regard to the use of the rocking-horse and the horse on wheels. On the other hand, he occasionally showed sufficient interest in another



child to join in play for a very short period. He sometimes took pleasure in teasing a smaller child; once he was observed to play a kind of peep-bo game with Jessica, and on another occasion to give up his horse at Harry's request. He often went away when the other children were joining in some group or singing games or when they were waiting for their meals. At such times he escaped into the garden and climbed to the top of the Jungle Gym as if he wanted to force an adult to come after him, but defiantly refused to come down when requested. He returned to the group when he felt inclined. Sometimes this defiance was shown when, with another boy, he did things of which he knew the adult would not approve (e.g., drinking from the milk jug). He sometimes ill-used toys, kicking, throwing, or stamping on stuffed animals or dolls. In his play with these, he seemed to alternate between loving and cuddling the dolls and small animals and smacking and kicking them and throwing them away; this was particularly noticeable on one or two occasions.

At the time when these observations were made, nothing was known about the family, but it seemed to be apparent that Jack was dealing with some degree of emotional conflict, and that his behaviour would be inexplicable unless one took account of the impact upon him of events in the family in an attempt to understand the emotional significance of these for him. It seemed to me that there were certain tentative deductions which could be made about the family from direct observation of his behaviour, if one considered his behaviour in the nursery school as a form of expression of the emotional conflicts implicit in his personal relationships within the family, having their origin in his desires, fears, loves and hates.

The impression I formed was of a boy who was faced with a situation with which he had not satisfactorily come to terms, and who was faced with the necessity of reconciling his conflicting feelings. His behaviour with dolls and soft toys, his interest in the picture of the Virgin and Child, and his behaviour with younger children suggested to me that the conflicting feelings might have arisen because of the presence of a baby at home of whom he was both jealous and fond. The jealousy would be likely to originate in his feeling that his position as baby in the family had been usurped, and to compensate for this loss of a special place in the family, the most important things in the nursery were those which he seemed to want to appropriate and with which he appeared to identify himself, e.g., the rocking-horse and the horse on wheels. If this were so, it would account for his rather violent reactions to the situations in the nursery in which he suffered "deprivation" or frustration, possibly because such situa-



tions might be interpreted by him as symbolic of the deprivations and frustrations which, in terms of his emotional experience, he suffered in the family.

When eventually I learnt something of the family circumstances I found that my tentative first impressions were to some extent confirmed. Jack was the youngest of several boys, but his position as baby of the family *had* been "usurped" by a baby girl, who, when Jack was admitted to the nursery, was fourteen months old. The home was a poor one, consisting of only two rooms; this meant that the family was overcrowded and that some of the children shared the parents' room; Jack had a cot in their room. The father had been out of work for some time and for approximately three years the mother had been employed as a domestic worker. The parents were very anxious that Jack should be a good little boy and expected from him a high standard of conduct.

The key to Jack's problem seems to have been that the baby girl was specially dear to the parents; their expectation of good behaviour on his part might increase his difficulties, since his conflicting feelings about the baby, expressed in some form of awkward behaviour, would give rise to a certain amount of guilt since they would make it more difficult for him to be "good". Thus Jack appeared to be faced with a dual problem—his conflicting feelings towards the baby and perhaps also towards his parents, and his need to compensate for loss of prestige in the home and of threatened loss of love if he did not conform to the standards expected of him.

The facts which I learnt about the family seemed, therefore, to confirm my initial impressions which had been gained particularly from the evidence of conflicting feelings expressed in his play with dolls and stuffed animals, and from his apparent need to compensate for his sense of loss. He seemed to achieve this compensation by his appropriation of the biggest, most important, and most wanted toys in the nursery, in particular, the rocking-horse, of which he took jealous care, and which he regarded in such a proprietary way that even the approach of another child would cause him to shout threateningly. It seemed to be essential to him to associate himself closely with something good and important to which everything and everybody was subordinate, so that toys might be "eaten" by the horse and the use of it by others prevented. This compensatory play appeared to contribute to his phantasy of power, a phantasy which was destroyed when he was unable to gain possession of the horse. The intensity of his feelings when another child was in possession of what he regarded as specially his own, can be seen from the behaviour recorded on November 1. There was un-



doubtedly a link between his treatment of the stuffed pig and his feelings about George who could not be dislodged from the horse. He showed little direct aggression towards George himself, although he tried in various ways to make him give up the horse; in his violent ill-treatment of the toy pig, however, the smacking, stamping and jumping on the pig were ways of expressing his aggressive feelings towards George, ways which were safe as compared with direct retaliation or attack. The choice of the plump pink pig seemed to be particularly appropriate, since George, who was plump and was wearing a pale pink overall, may have been associated in Jack's mind with the pig. In a similar way, Jack's play with the new horse on November 2 seemed to me to be related to his problem. His absorption while he was playing with the horse, and the position in which he had stood the toy man and the rabbit, suggested that, as in his play with the rocking-horse and the horse on wheels, he had identified himself with the new horse. One might surmise that the subordinate position of the toy man and the rabbit might express the relationship which he desired between his parents and himself—one in which they were both subordinate to his phantasy of his own power in contrast to the impotence he actually felt.

In the endeavour to understand Jack's behaviour in the nursery school, I found it was necessary to see it in relation to the situation at home, for the emotional dissatisfactions which found expression in his play obviously originated in that special situation in the home in which he appeared to have suffered deprivation and frustration. The nature of his reactions in the nursery school to minor situations of deprivation and frustration could be understood only if one saw these as in some way symbolically representing those original situations which had given rise to the emotional dissatisfactions. This symbolic representation in play seemed to be the means by which he was endeavouring to come to terms with the conflicting feelings engendered in the home situation. At the same time, these feelings appeared both to provide the motive power *and* to determine the means by which he sought to adjust to the situation; it appeared also that they were implicit in his social relations with children and adults in the nursery school, since his contacts with them might also be regarded as being motivated by his emotional dissatisfactions and as growing from the way in which these dissatisfactions found expression.

The value of thus understanding, even to a small degree, the significance of what a child expresses in play and in his social contacts, lies in the possibility of understanding, from a child's point of view, the reasons for his particular forms of expression, and of discovering



appropriate methods of treatment. The exaggerated forms in which Jack's phantasy of power and superiority was expressed thus gave an indication that he needed not to be made to feel inferior or less powerful by suffering further frustrations and inhibitions, but to be given opportunities for developing a real sense of power and superiority in reality situations. An examination of those situations which seemed to be regarded by him as frustrations would suggest the kinds of situations in which he might be helped to make more satisfactory adjustments; similarly, an examination of those giving him most satisfaction would provide a positive basis for helping him to gain a sense of achievement, e.g., being a server at meal-times, climbing, jumping, hammering, etc.

Jack and George,<sup>1</sup> who were almost of the same age when they were admitted, both presented problems in the nursery school. Of the two, Jack was often more difficult to manage because his aggressive feelings were more openly expressed in difficult and defiant behaviour and his persistent possessiveness caused more trouble in the group. George, however, presented the more difficult problem, for, although he caused less trouble in the group, he was less easy to reach and to help since he was more inhibited by anxiety and seemed to be much more tied up with his phantasies; he had not begun to make any satisfactory *real* use of his power in his life in the nursery school except in a symbolic way in his phantasy play. In George's case, more open defiance and aggression would have been an indication of progress in adjustment, since they would have suggested that there had been some diminution of guilt and anxiety which would make it more possible for him to come to terms with situations in his real life. In Jack's case, however, more open defiance and aggression would have suggested that, instead of making progress, he was tending to regress.

The projection into the nursery school situation of the central core of the difficulty in the family situation<sup>2</sup> through the medium of substitutes (e.g., toys) is something that can be studied in any group of young children who are given the opportunity to play freely. This "central core of the difficulty in the family situation" may often be found to be jealousy of the baby at home, a common problem among nursery school children since many of the children attending nursery schools are "ex-babies". The examples which follow give some further evidence of the intensity of a young child's feelings about the "new baby" and show how this family situation is projected into the nursery school situation.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 96-100.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote p. 159.



*Timothy, 2:2.*

Timothy's mother had just come home from hospital with a new baby. Timothy, prior to the birth of the baby, had been making satisfactory progress, but after the advent of the baby, began to regress to baby ways. Although he had been speaking quite well prior to the birth of the baby, he now ceased to speak, and expressed himself in loud screams and shouts. He showed considerably more dependence upon adults, as if to demonstrate that he, too, was still a baby and needed his mother's care and attention.

One day he was using a hammer to break up pieces of wood when, turning away from the bench at which he was working, he saw a very realistic baby doll sitting in a pram near the bench. Yielding to a sudden uncontrollable impulse, he brought his hammer down upon the doll and smashed it. There was an immediate outcry from the older children; Timothy himself looked somewhat startled at the result of his action, and needed the reassurance of the adult that the baby doll could be "made better" again.

*Tony, 3:0.*

Tony had been sent to a children's home while his mother was in hospital for her confinement; he had been admitted to the nursery school two or three weeks before he was sent away from home and was readmitted after his return home. On the day he returned he was heard muttering to himself, "Naughty baby, naughty baby!" He had a general air of being disgruntled; he was more dependent upon his mother, clinging to her when she left him in the nursery school, and during the day he wanted to draw attention to himself by sitting close to an adult, by touching her, and by difficult and defiant behaviour.

During the next three months, his mother complained repeatedly about his difficult behaviour at home, his temper tantrums, his disobedience and defiance, and particularly about his cruelty to his baby sister. It was after he had attacked the baby, when it had been necessary for the mother to take her to the eye hospital for treatment, that an attempt was made in school to find a way of helping him to come to terms with his jealousy. This was done by providing him with a wooden doll. The body and limbs of this doll were taken into the nursery and Tony was invited to help to tie on the limbs with string. As other children were watching, Tony announced very firmly, "It's mine!" He immediately appropriated it when the limbs were on, and jiggled the doll up and down as if it were a baby, saying, "Its mine, ain't it?"

He carried the doll to the sand-pit, buried it in the sand, then



poured more sand over it. He then jumped on it, shouting meanwhile, "I've got a dolly." He then unearthed the doll and threw it across the room; when another child picked it up, Tony snatched it back, saying, "It's mine!" Then he went to the adult who had helped him to make the doll and asked, "Did you make this for me?" He then turned and said to Janet, "This lady made it for me." He put the doll's arm above its head and said, "That's like a tall policeman; he's stopping the buses." Then he asked, "Shall I go and put sand all over her again?" He buried the doll in the sand again and called out gleefully, "She can't see now." After jumping up and down on the doll he pulled it out, put it in the pram, then immediately took it out and threw it across the room, then as he picked up and threw the doll again, he said, "Coo, he's been and bashed himself."

He then tried to make the doll walk across the floor, when he could not manage this he looked up and said, "He won't walk." He threw it down again, then once more buried it in the sand. He left it there while he went to play with a cart; Tom picked up the doll and played with it for a few moments and Tony appeared to take no notice until Tom threw it down, then he picked it up, gave it to the adult who had made the doll for him, and sat beside her to look at a picture. A little later he climbed on to her knee, and, holding the doll in his arms, rocked it to and fro, saying in a crooning voice, "Nice little baby, nice little baby."

He took the doll home with him at tea-time; next morning he came in smiling, saying that his doll was broken and that his granny had put it in a drawer; he seemed pleased that it was broken. Incidentally, another wooden doll was made and put into the nursery to replace the broken one. Tony occasionally played with this doll, but did not attempt to appropriate it as his own.

The impact upon the child of a family situation such as this, and his attempt to come to terms with the problem through the use of toys, e.g., as "substitutes" for the baby, may be studied from two angles: (a) that of the child's own difficulties, and (b) that of the teacher's attempts to deal with the difficulties. The general indications which a teacher has to go upon may be the increased dependence of the child, sometimes associated with regression to earlier forms of behaviour; the direct expression of aggression, or the displacement of aggressive feelings from the original object to substitute objects; the defiance and ambivalent attitudes.<sup>1</sup> All of these

<sup>1</sup> See Susan Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, pp. 234-5, 250-3, 309, Routledge, 1933.



are types of behaviour which are likely to increase the child's feeling of not being wanted and loved since such behaviour is not "love-worthy".

Besides the expression of the problem by difficult behaviour, a child may give other specific indications which, if followed up by the teacher, may enable her to take some positive action in line with the direction indicated by him; in Tony's case this was done by means of the gift of a wooden doll, i.e., a "baby" that could not be easily harmed.

The things Tony said and did are interesting both as a means of illuminating the problem and also of demonstrating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the method of dealing with the problem, e.g., his appropriation of the doll, coupled with the idea of it as a special gift—"It's mine; the lady made it for me"; his ambivalent attitudes, shown in the hating and loving of the "naughty baby" and the "nice little baby"; his alternation between wanting to possess it and wanting to be rid of it. During his ill-treatment of the doll, his remarks about it seemed to be very relevant to the situation and to show clearly the displacement of his feelings on to the doll; e.g., "She can't see now" (his baby sister had had to be taken to the eye hospital); "He's been and bashed himself" (it was Tony who had "bashed" the baby); "That's like a tall policeman, he's stopping the buses" (i.e., in a controlling rôle; Tony needed to feel "controlled"); "He won't walk" (i.e., the baby won't be a playmate).

This effective method of approach to Tony and to his problem was by means of a gift which proved to be just what he needed—a substitute object for his ambivalent feelings and a safe outlet for his aggression; it was good as a substitute object since it could not easily be spoiled. Such a gift would be tangible proof of the adult's continued support and affection, despite his aggressive behaviour.

It is only by an awareness of the value and significance for the child of material which can be used as a means of self-expression that one can fully understand the depths of feeling beneath what one might superficially call "objectionable behaviour", when his play with toys or his contacts with children are of a rough, disorderly and aggressive nature. It is equally important to appreciate the less direct ways by which a young child may give expression to his conflicting feelings, and to know how to support him in his struggle to come to grips with these feelings. The teacher has an important part to play in conveying to the child in terms that he can comprehend that she understands what is wrong.

The following examples recorded by students during their teaching practices show how this was done in an endeavour to help two



children, not merely to settle down in the nursery school, but to come to terms with the situation at home which was troubling them.

*Larry, 2:10.*

When Larry first came to the nursery school he was very unhappy, crying continually, and asking for reassurance from adults, but as nothing that they said satisfied him, he continually drifted from one adult to another in his search for reassurance. It was known that there was a new baby brother at home; Larry, however, rarely mentioned the baby when he was at school and apparently behaved well towards the baby when at home. He often asked, "Mummy's coming soon, isn't she?" but the teacher's reply, "Yes, after you have had dinner and then a rest, she will come," did not seem to convince him. He wandered around, aimlessly touching or moving things, but resisting the teacher's attempts to interest him in any of the activities. Once when the teacher ignored his question his eyes filled with tears; similarly, on another occasion when he followed the teacher and she did not see him, his face wrinkled up as if he were going to cry. During story time he sometimes asked about his mother; on one occasion the teacher asked him to tell her his baby's name; he told her then gazed round the room thoughtfully. Seeing a pram nearby, he pushed it, then wandered away nearly in tears, trotting backwards and forwards with short running steps, grizzling.

Later in the day, another child pointed out to the student who was observing Larry that a train was passing the school (the railway embankment was alongside the school). Noticing that Larry was stretching up in an attempt to see the train she offered to lift him so that he could stand on the low wall by the verandah. He nodded, so she did this. After the train had passed and before she lifted him down she said, "Well, well, what a big boy you are now! You're really big and important, aren't you?" He smiled and said, "Yes." She then continued, "You are much taller than I am, and I expect you are as big as your daddy now, very important indeed." She hesitated, wondering whether or not to mention the baby, then decided not to lose such an opportunity, so she said, "You're bigger than your baby brother too, aren't you?" This seemed to interest him very much and his eyes sparkled. The student continued, "You'll be able to help Mummy to look after the baby now." She lifted him down and he ran off happily. His behaviour during the rest of the afternoon was so different that the teacher asked, "What has come over little Larry?" When the children were playing "Here we go round the mulberry bush" Larry pretended to be very "naughty",



refusing to hold hands properly and laughing heartily.

A month later, despite the fact that the intervening Easter holiday had meant that he had had to get used to school again, Larry no longer seemed to be worried about his mother, for he had ceased to ask if she was coming for him. He had become particularly interested in and possessive about a tricycle, and would scream loudly if another child had something he wanted. During the next four weeks, as more activities became available, this possessiveness became less evident, partly because Larry began to be interested in experimental play with water, partly because there was less competition for the tricycle and so it was usually available when he wanted it.

About this time the student gave him a peg doll as a special gift; he seemed to be interested in it, was pleased when he was told that he could keep it and put it into his pocket. Later, he brought it to the student and asked her to look after it for him. During the following week he began to play quite a lot with Stanley, a happy, bright child who played with a variety of activities; this meant that Larry played with such things as clay and sand, in the Home Corner, and at the woodwork bench.

Noticing one morning that Larry, with three other boys, was constructing a train with big boxes, the student provided a conductor's hat and some tickets. Larry accepted them when they were offered to him; he did not at first put the hat on, but sat in one of the boxes and played with the tickets. When Fred joined him, Larry gave the hat to him, then with two other boys constructed a bus with a driver's cabin in front. They played together on the bus for an hour, and during part of this time Larry was wearing the hat and really seemed to be leading the game. This happened again on the following day.

During the same week, Larry joined small groups of children in doing such things as scrubbing pastry boards and rolling pins, washing clothes and pegging them on a line, and playing "shop". He tended to be frightened of the playful aggression of other children; e.g., when three children who were playing a "lion game" were crouching in a large box which had bars across one side. When the student was sitting with some young new children, the "lions" came out to "catch a man", frightening the new children. Before the "lions" came too close the student shooed them back into their cage; this satisfied the little ones. When the "lions" were back in their cage, Larry went up and put his hand through the bars; one of the "lions" pretended to bite it and Larry rushed off shouting hysterically with a mixture of excitement and fright. He repeated this



several times, till he seemed no longer afraid, but did it in fun.

*Mervyn*, 3:9.

Mervyn was the eldest of a family of four children; the next in age was 2½ years and the youngest were twins of eighteen months. The mother, whose health was not very good, was said to be very particular about the children's appearance and manners. Mervyn was usually brought to school by his aunt.

Mervyn used to cry bitterly on arrival at school, and then, a little later, would walk around, frowning, making no contact with other children, and closing up completely if anyone approached him. He generally cried at dinner-time, refusing to eat unless he really liked the food, and asking to go to the lavatory three or four times during the meal. Sometimes he would make some remark such as, "My daddy's gone to work today" or "I've got two babies at home." The student guessed that this might be where the trouble originated, and one day Mervyn himself confirmed her guess when he brought two photographs to school, one of his mother with the twins, and one of his father with Mervyn and his brother. He showed the photographs to the student and told her which was "Daddy" and "Mummy" and Mervyn, but very pointedly refused to talk about the twins or his brother, and snatched the photographs back. He carried them around for about fifteen minutes, then put them on the teacher's table and seemed to forget about them.

A few days later he was seen at the clay table banging a piece of clay with all his might; one of the children was making a clay man so the student suggested to Mervyn that he might make a clay baby if he liked. He did this, and a few minutes later showed her the baby he had made; she admired it, then he took it back and hammered it as hard as he could with his closed fist until it was quite flat. The student suggested that he could make it again, but he did not want to. Three days later, he again made another baby with clay, and while he was making it he kept telling the student that he had two babies at home. When he had finished it, instead of hammering it he gave it to her, so she thanked him and put it in her bag.

About this time he was being rather aggressive towards some of the other children, and when he hit one of the boys and made him cry the student offered him a roughly made wooden doll, asking him if he would like to have the wooden baby. His face lit up and he said, "Oh yes." She said, "How would you like to make another one for yourself?" He immediately began to sulk and said, "No, I want this one." He carried the doll around, saying, "Look at my baby." Presently one of the arms came off and he went to mend it



at the woodwork bench. He hammered the doll so hard, however, that eventually it was broken up. The student asked him if he would like to make another doll and offered him some wood, but he said, "No," and walked away looking rather pleased with himself.

The student commented that this aggressive play seemed to do him quite a lot of good, for he was much more contented afterwards and did not cry again except when the doctor came to examine the children. He was very keen to do jobs for the student, especially enjoying helping to put out the rest-beds. He would go to the student when she was putting out beds, and say, "I'll do it with you." By the end of the month (i.e., the period during which the student was in the school) he seemed to be as happy as any of the other children.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The problem of jealousy in early childhood*

These examples show what can be achieved when an adult sets out to understand a child's "private and personal view of the world" of his own family, so that she can share his view and thus help him to feel less "alone" and less bewildered, and can enable him to find legitimate and safe outlets for his aggressive feelings. There are people who think that if a young child has been adequately "prepared" for the advent of the new baby there will be no trouble, but if the impact of the event upon the older child is really considered from his point of view, it will be seen to be quite logical that he should react by regressing to infantile modes of behaviour, as if in this way to demonstrate that he is not yet big enough to manage without his mother, and that he feels he needs her quite as much as the new baby does because *he* is still a baby; moreover, "Mummy" belonged to him first.

Dr. Susan Isaacs in *Social Development in Young Children* quotes from a letter received from a mother who wrote to her for advice<sup>2</sup>:

"My little boy is one year ten months, and his sister is nine months old. He was very unhappy at her arrival and used to pull her off my lap. Now he is on the whole very good—tries to protect her from "bumps", shares things with her, etc. But if he is tired or hurts himself at once he wants my exclusive attention. As I am often quite alone this is sometimes difficult, and now he has a funny new trick. If anything goes wrong or at the slightest word of censure he flops down and *crawls*. He has walked since he was ten months old, and is particularly active and sure-footed—can climb and run like a three-year-old."

<sup>1</sup> See also Pat, pp. 153-9.

<sup>2</sup> S. Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, p. 61, Routledge, 1933.



This problem of jealousy of the new baby and of rivalry for the mother's love and attention is perhaps one of the most severe of emotional problems, partly because the jealousy felt by the older child for the younger may be something that is very difficult for the mother to accept and understand, since she may feel that she has done all she can to avoid giving cause for jealousy. From the child's point of view, however, the "new baby" situation may give rise to unpleasant and painful feelings of rejection and deprivation; in reality he is neither rejected nor deprived, but the feelings he experiences in this situation may be those associated with rejection and deprivation.

The records of Ursula<sup>1</sup> given by Dr. Susan Isaacs show how difficult it was for this child of nearly four years to share her mother with the new baby, despite the fact that she had been most carefully prepared for the baby's coming. In contrast to the 22-month-old baby who could only demonstrate his feelings by means of his behaviour, Ursula was old enough to put her protest into words. When told about the new baby who was coming, "she said in a weepy voice, 'Why, Mummie? I don't want one while I'm little. I don't want one till I'm big.' 'Mummie, you will be busy when my brother or sister comes out.' That is to say, Ursula is afraid she won't get so much attention. 'What shall I do when my little brother or sister comes and sleeps in my room and cries and 'sturbs me?' She wants her mother to sleep with her: 'Oh, Mummie, when will you sleep with me?'" After the baby was born Ursula expressed her feeling "... that her mother was nicer to R. (the baby) than to her, 'R. has much more of you than I do,' though, in fact, the contrary was true."

The importance of understanding what lies behind the various kinds of difficult behaviour seen in young children emerges clearly when considering possible ways of dealing with any child who shows unsatisfactory adjustment. There is no royal road to the treatment of difficulties in adjustment except through understanding the peculiar problems of each child, and, more particularly, what these mean in the inner psychic life of the child. Perhaps one of the nursery school teacher's most important functions is to appreciate and understand the severity of the conflicting feelings experienced by some young children in situations which appear to make them feel deprived and rejected. If she understands how it may feel to a young child to lose the prestige of being the "baby", and to have feelings of being rejected and deprived, she is in a strong position

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *Social Development in Young Children*, Routledge, 1933, pp. 377-8.



for helping him to come to grips both with his own feelings and with the situation at home. It is even possible sometimes to foresee in advance the ways in which a child who is grappling with a difficult situation at home may be helped.

In the example of Pat which follows, it was possible for the teacher to plan for this child's reception into nursery school B because of her appreciation both of the situation at home and of the effect of this situation upon him; he was regarded as a child with special needs, and steps were taken at the outset to meet his needs.

Pat was three and a half years of age when he was admitted to the nursery school; he was causing his mother a great deal of anxiety because he seemed to be retarded, particularly in postural and locomotor control and in speaking, and also because of the "attacks" he made on other small children whom he met in the street as well as on his younger brother. These attacks took the form of scratching and pinching other children's faces.

It was anticipated that he would be very difficult to deal with in the nursery school. Knowing this, and also knowing something about the family circumstances, the teacher made certain preparations for him and kept various possibilities in mind, so that his introduction to life in the nursery school should be as positive and satisfying to him as possible. The most important basis for this introduction was to ensure that a good, positive relationship should be established with him by the teacher, but it was recognised that this could only be achieved if given tangible form.

Since Pat had enjoyed his position as baby in the family for only a short period (he was the third child in a family of four children and was little more than a year older than the younger boy), it was recognised that he might need to be dependent upon the teacher for a period, i.e., that he might need to be a "baby". The teacher, therefore, had to plan so that she could sometimes have him on her lap and for short periods give him her undivided attention. Bearing in mind that he might attack other children, she planned to provide him with legitimate and safe ways of expressing aggressive feelings; e.g., clay and dough to pinch or break up; a log or thick block of wood, and long nails to drive into the wood with a hammer; a blunt knife or old scissors for chopping up clay, dough, plasticine or paper; skittles, and a bean bag for knocking down the skittles; strips of wood to be pounded into fragments for lighting the kitchen fire; a wooden doll into which he could drive nails to make eyes, buttons, etc.; scrubbing, to wash off dirt or marks (e.g., from the painting easel, clay and dough boards); blowing soap bubbles.



It was also recognised that he might need toys or activities which would contribute to building up in him a feeling of security and which might have a soothing effect upon him. Thus, in case he was upset when his mother left him at the nursery school, a posting-box might be available, for in playing with this he would find safely inside the box when he took off the lid the small bricks which he had previously posted through the holes in the lid—a "losing and finding" game<sup>1</sup> which often proves to be reassuring to young children on their first day away from mother. It was anticipated that he might need some possessions to which he had a special right, e.g., a "treasure bag" containing a variety of oddments likely to appeal to a small boy, an electric light switch, an Elastoplast spool, a large nut and bolt, toy soldiers, a doll's feeding bottle, also a few picture cards, especially "Mother and Child" pictures, and a home-made book of familiar things in the home and perhaps also of babies.

It was assumed that he might be interested in dolls and prams, and that he might like a few special dolls of his own, e.g., a family of little dolls made from clothes pegs, with a box or basket in which he could carry them; a wooden or rag doll; a doll for bathing; bag shapes which he could help to stuff for making a rag doll.

Play with water might be a soothing activity, especially if he were provided with his own small bowl of water, together with a toy tea-pot and tea-cups, or ducks or boats to float, or tiny dolls to bath.

Much to the surprise of the teacher, Pat was less difficult to deal with than had been anticipated. She had arranged her work so that she could give him quite a lot of her attention on his first day in school; her initial contacts with him can be summarised as follows<sup>2</sup>:

As he was screaming when his mother left him, the teacher sat with him in the Home Corner; he screamed for five minutes, then watched the other children. Twenty minutes later she gave him the model farm-yard animals; she knelt on the floor with him and stood the fences up and put the animals inside. Pat gently kicked them down; she stood them up again, and again he kicked them down. Later in the morning he played with them by himself.

When someone accidentally trod on his finger and he came crying to the teacher, she called him a "big boy" and took him to the bathroom where he pulled the lavatory chain, washed his hands, and was shown his own toilet articles; he was very pleased with them. He then sat on her lap to have some milk while she drank

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, "The Nature and Function of Phantasy", *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, p. 115, Hogarth Press, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to the Head-teacher for these records.



her tea; she played a game with him, peeping into his mug to see how much milk he had drunk. He accompanied her to the kitchen to return his mug to the cook, looked out of the window at the passing buses and talked about them. When they returned to the playroom, he sat on the teacher's lap while she sang to the children; he enjoyed the song, and smiled; he crawled on to the teacher's lap during dinner and put his arms round her neck.

At nap-time, when he screamed at the sight of the beds, she gave him a plastic doll; he seemed to be fascinated by the softness of the doll and squeezed its head. When the teacher took off his shoes, he threw the doll away; she replaced it and tucked it up beside him; he crouched over it for a while. Later he cried and she took him on her lap; he pushed away from her and she put him back on the bed and sat beside him reading. He then climbed on to her lap, put one finger in his mouth and played with her mouth and chin, trying to put his finger in her mouth rather as a baby does. After rest-time, he at first refused to go with another adult, but went with her when he was told that she was going to put his shoes on. At the end of the afternoon he waved goodbye quite happily.

In his subsequent contacts with the teacher it was obvious that he trusted her; he went to her for comfort and reassurance, e.g., when he fell or hurt himself; he smiled at her a great deal and greeted her by hugging her; he enjoyed sitting on her lap when being comforted, when he needed help with his dinner, and when tired after dinner or at the end of the afternoon. It was noticeable, however, that his need for this kind of special attention steadily decreased; e.g., on the first three days there were ten recorded instances of Pat sitting on the teacher's lap; on the next three days, five instances, on the next three days, four instances, and during the next six days, two instances; during a fortnight in May, apart from a few records of Pat's hugging of his teacher, there were no recorded instances of him sitting on her lap.

Other characteristics in his contact with his teacher are worth noting; e.g., he enjoyed a joke, and showed this by cuddling her and by chuckling in response to the teacher's enjoyment of *his* jokes (such as a joke about his pretending to be asleep); when she told him to say "Thank you" when she had put his hat on correctly, he pulled her towards him and kissed her (he often did this). If he caught her eye when he was on the point of smacking another child (experimentally rather than aggressively) he would grin and desist. Sometimes he needed verbal reassurance; e.g., while listening to a story about a little boy with a baby brother, he scowled at the picture of the baby and said, "Not baby!" The teacher quickly replied, "No,



Pat is a *big* boy. *George* is the baby." (George was his young brother; it appeared that the baby, as well as other members of the family, referred to Pat as "Ba-ba"; obviously Pat was associating himself with the big brother in the story and his reaction suggests that he resented being called "Ba-ba" by his small brother. His mother had greeted him one afternoon with the words "You baby!" when she had found him sitting on his teacher's knee.) His reaction to his teacher's reassurance that he was a big boy was one of relief, though it was interesting that he sat on her lap for the rest of the story. On the following day, however, he definitely associated himself with being "grown-up" and a "workman", by asking if he could help to paint the ship that other children had built.

He was obviously interested in other children and his contacts with them were varied; there were far more friendly contacts than aggressive ones. In his first three weeks in school, for instance, twenty-four friendly contacts were recorded as against eleven aggressive contacts. His aggressive contacts were usually reactions of scratching or hitting if other children got in his way or interfered with his play, but there were some reactions which had the appearance of being aggressive but which were really experimental; e.g., when he pinched or ran his hands over a child's cheeks. This action was so similar to his pinching of the plastic doll and to the way in which he handled dough (rubbing his hands over it and pinching it) that it seemed that he was concerned with the softness, roundness and smoothness of a child's cheek (as he was with the soft coolness of dough) rather than intending to be aggressive. He was by no means an aggressive child; in fact, the general impression he gave was of a friendly, rather gentle child. He gradually began to show quite a lot of consideration for other children and some readiness to stand aside for them momentarily; e.g., on the slide. On the other hand, he was able to stand up for his own rights. He was affected by crying children and showed this by watching them and by sucking his fingers. The finger-sucking occurred when he was unsure.

He played with a variety of activities and had definite favourites; e.g., the doll and pram, in which he took a proprietary interest, and dough, which he often used as soon as he came to school in the morning. In his use of dough, he would rub, squeeze, prod and pull it; later he used pastry cutters very carefully and competently. Dough was an activity that seemed to keep him absorbed for the longest periods. He was interested in small coloured bricks and pegs and spent long periods building towers of small bricks, putting bricks together then separating them and inserting others,<sup>1</sup> and arranging

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 159 and Paul, pp. 85-7.



pegs in spirals or in wavy lines. He enjoyed painting and was always very proud of his efforts.

He was at first very uncertain about climbing, and showed little skill or co-ordination; he would hang on the parallel ropes, and jump as if attempting to turn a somersault, but was unable to lift his feet more than a few inches from the ground. By the summer, he had learnt to climb and balance on the climbing frame, to hang upside down, to swing from the bars, and to balance without holding. As his skill and control increased, there was a gradual change of emphasis in his play, he turned from his concern with "babies" (his play with a doll in a pram or carry-cot) to a concern with "real work" (painting the ship). He showed a great interest in stories, songs, and finger-plays, and joined in eagerly when the children danced to music. He understood all that was said to him and quickly and competently carried out requests.

A detailed record of Pat kept for an hour one morning, a year after he had been admitted to the nursery school, brought out clearly the effect upon him of two quite different major influences. He was observed at the beginning of the morning when he arrived with his mother. (By this time the younger brother was also attending the nursery school, and Pat had constituted himself George's protector.)

Pat's mother, unlike most other mothers who came confidently into the nursery with their children running ahead, had both her children close beside her as she entered the nursery. She came in, bending over her two children, whom she helped by pushing them forward with her hands on their heads; she walked along in a stooping position. Pat also walked along in the same position, bending forward from the waist, knees slightly bent. He moved along with a flat-footed, stooping shuffle which seemed to be typical of him at times, in particular, when he was with his mother; this contrasted sharply with his posture and movements later in the morning after his mother had gone, when he was pulling George around in a truck. His posture then was upright and his movements normal for his age. The degree of confidence and skill shown also contrasted noticeably with his tentative, unsure movements when with his mother. The truck was a big one with the front wheels on a swivel; it was guided by one handle attached to the swivel. Pat seemed to know exactly what he could do with this truck; mostly he ran with it confidently in a small playground where toys and children presented many obstacles to be avoided; he showed considerable skill and control in preventing any collisions. Mostly he did the obvious thing, which was to run around the climbing frame in the



middle of the yard, but sometimes he pulled the truck round by the jumping stand. To do this, he had to get it through narrow gaps, and here he showed very good judgment of distances; occasionally he had to pull up sharply and even change the direction of the truck quickly, and he did this by a clever use of the swivel. There was no sign, while he was playing with this truck, of the bowed shoulders and the bent knees.

Later in the morning he showed independence and skill, and delight in his own achievement, when, with very little help, he put on his dungarees and coat. He was slow and deliberate in doing this and showed much perseverance. The dungarees presented quite a problem as they were of stiff corduroy.

One morning about this time, the teacher sat beside him while he was using the dough, and began to play with him. The following record was kept.

While Pat was playing with the dough, the teacher made a "head" with the dough and put one eye on it. Pat made another eye, as big as the head; he put it on the head, then putting his hand over both balls, squeezed the dough tightly. He then took all the dough; the teacher in fun, tried to get some back. Pat very crossly said, "No! No!" Another child gave the teacher some of her dough. The teacher made "a man" with the dough; "That's a man," she said.

"My daddy," said Pat.

"Well, make him some eyes; how many?" said the teacher.

"Two," said Pat. He made two little balls and put them on the face.

"Anything else?" asked the teacher.

"Buttons," Pat replied. He made some and put them on the "man".

The teacher then made another figure.

"Mummy," said Pat. Together they made eyes and buttons for the "Mummy", then Pat said she must have a "bot-bot".

The teacher made a smaller figure. "Ba-ba," said Pat. "Now me!"

The teacher made another figure larger than the last, Pat helping to make the parts. There were now four figures: "Mummy, Daddy, Ba-ba, and Pat."

Pat then squeezed them all up in his hands, roaring with laughter as he did so. Other children who were round the table also laughed with Pat and the teacher. The teacher began the play all over again, beginning to make the four figures. Pat, however, got up and went to the slide to play; his small brother also played with him. Every



few minutes Pat came to see how the teacher was getting on. As she finished making one figure, Pat squeezed it up, laughing loudly. Each time she completed a figure, he returned and squeezed it up, laughing loudly as he did so.

It was then time to clear up; Pat helped to put the toys away and was very pleased with himself.

The two major influences in Pat's life—the situation at home on the one hand, the personal relationships there and the effect of these upon him, and, on the other hand, the situation at school and the effect upon him of the teacher's understanding of his needs—produced quite different kinds of reactions which could be observed. Whereas he was regarded by his parents as being seriously retarded and "abnormal", in school, apart from some slight retardation in postural and locomotor co-ordination and in speaking, he gave little indication of being either seriously retarded or abnormal. He showed a considerable degree of manipulative skill, and unusual powers of concentration, particularly in his play with bricks. His method of using bricks was interesting<sup>1</sup>; on one occasion, for example, when he was building a wall, he built two towers with a space between, then built a third tower between the two to fill up the gap. When he demolished the wall, instead of pushing the towers over, he carefully took off the bricks two at a time, replacing them in an orderly way in the brick box.

Pat seemed to be an unusually intelligent and sensitive child, friendly, affectionate, and with a sense of humour. His relationship with the teacher and with the other adults in the school was one of complete confidence and trust, seen in the expression in his face, in his stance, and in his readiness to attempt and to persevere with difficult things.

*The projection of personal problems into the nursery school situation.*<sup>2</sup>

These examples of children, who, in their behaviour in the nursery school, expressed something of the anxiety and distress which they felt, show also how these children projected their personal problems into the nursery school situation.

Their anxiety and distress could, it seemed, be accounted for (a) in a general way by the situation at home, the change in status for

<sup>1</sup> See also Paul's use of bricks, pp. 84–8.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Susan Isaacs emphasises that "the first value which the physical world has for the child is as a canvas upon which to project his personal wishes and anxieties, and his first form of interest in it is one of dramatic representation". *Social Development in Young Children*, p. 210, Routledge, 1933.



the child, following the advent of the new baby, and the personal significance of this change for him, and (b) in a more specific way, the child's parting from his mother on his admission to school, which might have particular significance for the child as meaning to him that he had been "turned out" of the home while the baby was left in sole possession of the mother.

The help given to each child depended upon the adult's ability to see the problem as the child saw it. In each case, the "problem situation" in the home (i.e., as it appeared to the child), gave rise to problem behaviour in school, such as regression to baby ways, undue aggressiveness and defiance, distress and misery and inability to play. When the children found appropriate methods of projecting the problem through their play in the nursery school, the anxiety and distress were eased. In nearly every case it was through the adult's special understanding and help that these children found ways of projecting the problem. In each case, it seemed fairly evident that the underlying reason for the child's anxiety was his jealousy of the baby, which caused him to feel aggressive towards the baby and perhaps also towards the mother, and at the same time to feel anxious and guilty about his aggressive feelings. It was in coming to terms, not only with the situation, but with the guilt and anxiety about such feelings, that these children needed special help. This seemed to be most effectively achieved through the symbolic use of toys and materials.

In Larry's case it was to his incipient desire to be "grown-up" to which the student appealed and which found its fulfilment in the bus play and in being the "driver" or the "conductor" of the "bus". It seems likely that Larry's fear of the playful aggression of the "lions coming to eat a man" was in fact his fear of his own repressed aggressive feelings.

In the other cases, it was specially interesting to find that although the wooden doll was given as a doll and the dough and clay figures were made as "men", the children themselves gave these objects personal significance by naming them as the "baby", the "daddy", the "mummy", thus using them as symbols for these people; they then proceeded to find a channel for the safe and legitimate expression of their strong feelings, by losing, throwing away, burying, banging, or destroying these objects, and moreover, doing this with an adult's implicit support and consent. It seemed that the teacher's special function lay not only in her acceptance of such aggressive and destructive play, but also in her appreciation of the fact that what had been "destroyed" could be "made well" again. Under-



lying these strong feelings and giving rise to the various kinds of problem behaviour was the implicit clinging by any one of these children to that special relationship between mother and baby which either made him want to remain the baby, or caused him to feel intensely resentful towards both the mother and the new baby when he seemed to be deprived of that special relationship. As the teacher helped him to canalise these feelings in his symbolic "destruction", in play, of one or both of these people, she helped, at the same time, to reinforce his urge towards reparation, by making possible the symbolic recreation of what he had destroyed. It seemed that the child was then more able to relinquish his dependent "baby claim" upon his mother, to accept the teacher as one who understood his feelings and upon whom he could rely, and to begin to identify himself with grown-ups in doing grown-up things. This seemed both to depend upon and to result in his achievement of an independence related to his increase in muscular skill and co-ordination, to his enjoyment of being thus self-reliant and independent and, at the same time, able to co-operate, and to his growing awareness of the social satisfactions to be gained in contacts with others. But above all, these achievements appeared to be bound up with his acceptance of this psychological "weaning" from his mother, and, associated with this, a corresponding release from the related problems of jealousy. This also seemed to free him from much of his fear and anxiety, to enable him to find positive outlets for his energy, and to contribute to his further development.

There is thus seen to be a close link between a child's experience of the reality of the external world, his interpretation of that experience, and his own feelings about the meaning which such experience holds for him. He is concerned both with the reality of external objective facts and with the reality of his inner psychic life.

It is here that problems concerning reality and phantasy come to the fore, for phantasy is often regarded as the antithesis of reality. Dr. Susan Isaacs, discussing this question in her contribution "The Nature and Function of Phantasy", *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, points out the danger of using the word "phantasy" to mark a contrast to "reality", the latter word being taken as "identical with external or material or objective facts". She says, "But when external reality is thus called 'objective reality', this makes an implicit assumption which denies to psychical reality its *own objectivity as a mental fact*. . . . A related usage is to think of 'phantasy' as something 'merely' or 'only' imagined, as something unreal, in contrast with what is actual, what *happens* to one. This



kind of attitude tends towards a depreciation of psychical reality and of the significance of mental processes *as such*." Dr. Isaacs makes clear here the difference between "fantasy" (conscious day-dreams, fictions and so on) and "phantasy" (a psycho-analytic term connoting "unconscious mental content which may or may not become conscious"). Commenting upon Freud's discovery of the "*dynamic psychical reality*" which "initiated a new epoch of psychological understanding", she says, "He showed that the inner world of the mind has a continuous living reality of its own, with its own dynamic laws and characteristics, different from those of the external world."<sup>1</sup>

When a child is having difficulty in reconciling these different aspects of reality and is showing some resulting problems in personal adjustment, it appears that much of the impetus for the exploration and use of the external world in his relation with people and things is derived from his attempt to come to terms with the reality of his feeling-life. Severe emotional disturbance may, in some children, have the effect of holding up development, for until an emotionally disturbed child has begun to find a way of coming to terms with his personal difficulties, he seems to be comparatively unable to come to terms with external reality.

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, "The Nature and Function of Phantasy", *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, ch. III, Hogarth Press, 1952.



### CHAPTER THREE

## THE FUNCTION OF THE TEACHER IN FOSTERING THE PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

In the attempt to reach that understanding of young children which is most likely to be of help to them, I have found it essential to regard them as "whole persons", and, so far as is possible within the scope of one specific piece of work, to endeavour even in some small degree to become more fully aware of the interrelation between the various aspects of development, and thus to reach a deeper understanding of children's difficulties in personal adjustment.

Inevitably, the approach has been a qualitative rather than a quantitative one, for the findings are the results of the intuitive awareness and personal judgments and interpretations of those who have worked with and studied and helped the children. As such, the findings cannot be tested and proved except on the basis of experience, i.e., in the results as seen in the children themselves. It has not been my intention to cover the full range of problems met with in young children but rather to discover a way of approach to one or two of the most persistent of them and thus perhaps to indicate the approach to other problems.

### THE UNDERSTANDING OF YOUNG CHILDREN AS A SHARING OF THEIR VIEW OF LIFE

Starting from observed facts of behaviour in studying social development as one aspect of a child's personal adjustment, I have attempted to discover why social behaviour changes, as it does, with the child's growth, to search for the significant relations in the interplay between himself and his fellows, to penetrate into the "inner world" of the young child in an endeavour to learn something about the underlying motivating forces in his life, and in this connection to see how these are tied up with the relationships within the family. Further, in an attempt to integrate these studies, I have tried to see these aspects of a child's life and development in relation to his interpretation of reality as seen in his general behaviour, in his behaviour with other people, and in his play with toys.

The focal point of this work has been to discover, and increasingly



to understand, the relationships which have significance for the child and are relevant to his problems. By "problems" I have in mind (a) those problems presented by objective facts, which demand an intelligent grasp of relevant relationships for their solution; and (b) those problems which emerge because of the personal significance to the child of those same facts, for the solution of which some form of emotional adjustment is essential. I have differentiated between such problems as follows: (a) problems concerned with the objective reality of the external world; and (b) problems concerned with the inner psychic reality of the child's feelings: dual aspects of reality which have to be appreciated by the adult who seeks to help her children in their personal adjustment. To share the child's view of life, the adult needs to put herself in the child's place, seeing "reality" as he sees it, appreciating the effect upon him of the facts and events in his life, of his relationships with others, and, in particular, of the relationships in the home, recognising the forms of his expression of reality as *he* sees it, and finding in such self-expression the clues which he gives of his view of events and the help which he needs in adjusting both to the events and to his interpretation of them.

In seeking to achieve an understanding of the child's view of reality, an intuitive and intellectual discipline is demanded of the investigator. As a fundamental part of such a discipline, it is necessary to achieve an attitude of mind which might be described as one of "receptivity" towards the child and towards what he may be trying to convey through his behaviour and through his use of toys and play materials. It is necessary to develop an ability to be aware, not only of the relationships which have immediate and obvious significance for the *adult* (e.g., because of their cognitive value), but of the significance which these hold for the child, in which their affective value may be as important to him as their cognitive value, or even more important. In other words, it necessitates an appreciation of the "wholeness" of a child's experiences, both from the point of view of the interrelatedness of development, and from the point of view of the relation of the "whole child" to his life-experiences.

My reason for approaching this interrelated study of young children through observation of their social contacts in the nursery school was that this aspect of human behaviour is one of special importance both in relation to individuals and to groups. In seeking not only for the general pattern of behaviour in a particular group of children and of individuals but also for the significance of that behaviour, I arrived at two views of development. The first, which



emerged from the cross-section studies of the group and also from the longer individual studies, was one which enabled me to see the general developmental trends in the group in the changes taking place between 2 and 5 years in social approach and response—changes which seemed to represent typical trends for the children in these groups. These studies were carried out on the basis of what could be learnt from the observation of behaviour in specific situations and as a result of social maturation. In the further study of individuals and groups, when I attempted to discover the significance of behaviour in terms of motivating forces, I found that the individual's interpretation of experience was of particular importance, and from this I arrived at the second view of the pattern of development. I discovered in the study of certain children that there were some individual reactions to social challenges which did not fit into the pattern represented by the general trends for the group. When behaviour which was typical at a certain age noticeably occurred in an individual at a later age or in a more pronounced or even exaggerated form, such behaviour seemed to be indicative of some difficulty in personal adjustment. In such cases, the important factor appeared not so much to be either the immediate situation as such, or the degree of social maturation as such, but some factor or factors underlying the overt approaches and responses and promoting or hindering social maturation.

One could see how a child's feeling-reaction to events in the home and to changing relationships there might lead to a personal interpretation of those events and relationships in line with his feelings of jealousy, anxiety, aggression or guilt. This interpretation by the child seemed to give rise in his mind to a kind of distortion of the facts which was likely to lead to misunderstanding in his relationships in the home, primarily, it seemed, because the child's private and personal view of the situation appeared to differ from that of others in the family, in particular, from that of the parents.

This "distortion" seemed to stem from the conflicting feelings experienced by the child, and affected his behaviour and relationships in school as well as at home, for when these feelings were given expression, it was sometimes in forms of behaviour which exaggerated the child's feeling of not being "love-worthy", and might make it impossible for a child to use his toys and play materials even for self-expressive play. It seemed that only as the child's personal interpretation of events and relationships approximated more nearly to the reality of the actual facts was he enabled to achieve a shift of emphasis in his own attitude and thus became able to begin to achieve a more satisfactory personal adjustment.



*The child's personal interpretation of reality underlying some of his difficulties in development*

So far then as one could judge from the behaviour observed, one of the main factors underlying the child's ability or inability to adjust to reality seemed to be his own personal interpretation of his experience, i.e., the meaning that it held for him. On the one hand, there was the obvious meaning of things and events, regarded primarily from the standpoint of their objective value *as* things; on the other hand, there was the less obvious but equally important personal meaning of things, regarded primarily from the standpoint of their symbolic value to him as representatives of persons or things of importance to him to which he might react in terms of his feelings towards the original objects which they represented. It seemed also as if the same kind of thing might apply to situations; specific situations occurring in the present might represent some specially significant situations which had occurred in the past and which might to such an extent be linked in the child's mind with considerable emotional stress that these representative situations in the present might touch off strong emotional reactions, and thus affect the child's social relations with others. It seemed that such specific situations in the present might evoke behaviour which was "out of place" in the developmental pattern because they represented the situations that had given rise originally to the painful feelings from which the "out of place" behaviour was derived.

In the study of children whose behaviour causes them to be "misfits" in the group, I have selected two forms of behaviour which seem to be significant when occurring "out of place" in the developmental pattern. One is that which is manifested in undue egocentricity, which might take the passive form of withdrawal from reality, seen in attitudes and behaviour typical of "self-absorption", or which might take a more active form of self-interest and self-centredness. The other is that which is manifested in undue hostility and aggression, manifestations which may also be tied up with the active manifestation of self-centredness.

*Ego-centricity and personal adjustment*

Ego-centricity, which seems to be an early stage in social development characterised by behaviour which suggests that there is little appreciation of others as entities, is a state of mind which may be characteristic of a person of almost any age whose mind is so tied up with personal problems of *feeling* that events in the external world have significance only in terms of those inner feelings, and are interpreted in line with such predominating emotions as fear.



anxiety, guilt, and so on. The "inner significance" may effectively cut off the individual from others whose interpretation of events is on a reality basis, thus emphasising his loneliness.

In the play of young children, one may often recognise the particular significance according to the age and development of the child, the nature of the challenges which are predominant, and the changes that take place in the child's development as he meets these challenges, thus:

- (a) a young child may be mainly concerned with individual phantasies or with problems of the feeling life (primarily ego-centric);
- (b) he may be drawn out of himself by his concern with individual discovery and with the exploration of reality (i.e., with cognitive problems presenting specific challenges which, if accepted and dealt with in ways which are appropriate to the nature of the challenge, may form the "bridge" between individual phantasies and the world of reality);
- (c) he may achieve overlapping with another child or with a small group of children in the expression of problems of the feeling-life that are shared by others; these may sometimes be expressed in the identical use of material by the children, sometimes by some form of group phantasy;
- (d) he may become actively concerned with group discovery and exploration of reality and with the discovery of significant cognitive relations in the solving of practical problems.

#### *Hostility and aggression and personal adjustment*

In the process of development from the ego-centric attitudes of very young children to those attitudes of friendliness and co-operation and the capacity for responsible membership within the group seen often in the older nursery school children, there appears to be a growing awareness of other children which takes place not only through friendly interplay, but also by reason of the clashes experienced in social relationships. These clashes may give rise to various forms of aggressive behaviour, sometimes in connection with such motives as possession and power, but perhaps even more in connection with the kind of "reality" with which each child is concerned. The records given in the present work yield some evidence of two main forms of aggression in the developmental pattern which appear to be significant for development—aggression which is mainly ego-centric with the emphasis upon "self-protection", and that which is socially reciprocal with a greater emphasis upon



relationships with others. Records of the socially reciprocal types of aggression, particularly in their more experimental and playful forms, suggest that hostility and aggression may be positive signs of an increasing awareness of other children and may therefore be of special importance in the achievement of satisfactory social adjustment in the nursery years. This is more likely to be recognised if aggressive reactions are not regarded in any moral sense as being "right" or "wrong", but rather as a child's innate means of summing up energy for dealing with frustrations, whether these are presented by the material or the social environment.

It seemed that as these young children became able to come to terms with the reality both of the inner and of the external world, their reactions to frustrations and tensions gradually decreased in intensity and severity, so that aggressive reactions in the form of overt behaviour normally became fewer, less violent, and less diffuse and the children became better able to act in more socially acceptable and in increasingly discriminate and appropriate ways. In individuals, however, in whom this adjustment was difficult or even impossible, because of uncontrollable tensions within the feeling-life, hostility and aggression tended to persist, and in such individuals one might find diffuse aggressive reactions similar to the indiscriminate ones of a very young child.

One or two of the studies suggest that even the withdrawal from and shutting out of reality, although appearing to be completely negative and passive ways of protecting the self from unbearable tensions, may in fact be the individual's methods of controlling aggressive feelings that would otherwise be uncontrollable and that anything that brings such an individual out from his retreat may be likely to unleash, for a time, forms of aggression which may be difficult to control. In these cases, legitimate forms of expression of such aggressive feelings may be a necessary therapeutic stage in achieving satisfactory adjustment, provided that, as a therapeutic stage, it is dealt with positively and creatively.

This kind of adjustment was not something that a child could best achieve in a predominantly adult setting; he needed that companionship with other children which sprang from the discovery, in play, of "overlapping phantasies" giving rise to the sense of "togetherness" among children thus engaged (in contrast to being "alone" with the terrors of one's phantasies). Such "overlapping" in play, particularly when it led to responsible membership of a group concerned with the solution of real problems, seemed to result in considerable reassurance and an increase in confidence in the child.



*The child's adjustment to reality in his increasing grasp of external, real problems*

Play materials and playmates are thus seen to be of immense importance to the young child, for in accepting the challenges in both the material and the social fields of experience, he seems to find the means by which he can, on the one hand, explore the reality of the external world, and, on the other, achieve that "coming to terms" with the inner reality of his psychic life which is essential for satisfactory development.

The underlying principles which have emerged from this study are concerned primarily with the meaning for a young child of the experiences to which he is subjected, and the significance for the teacher of the experiences which the child initiates and controls for himself, often as a means of expressing his feelings about people and his emotional conflicts in relation to them: a significance which dynamically affects the teacher's relationship with the child.

In the material collected for this study, there is considerable evidence to illustrate that the child's most creative mode of adjustment to the exigencies of his environment is his natural impulse to play, and that in his use of this mode of adjustment, he not only achieves considerable relief from tension, but has a safe and satisfactory way of testing out and coming to terms with the dual aspects of reality and of achieving a satisfactory relationship between them. It is thus of vital importance for the optimum all-round development of young children that those who are concerned with their care and education should increasingly understand both the nature of the children and of their modes of self-expression and adjustment.

The quality of understanding which is called for is concerned quite as much with "feeling with" the child as with an intellectual understanding of him. It is not until one has put oneself "on a level" with the child, particularly in an intuitive sense, that one is in a position to meet his very urgent though probably less obvious needs. In this study I have dealt mainly with two of these levels of experience: (a) on the level of individual or group concern with the "feeling" emphasis of experience; and (b) on the level of individual or group exploration of the cognitive aspects of experience. It is by a disciplined and sustained awareness which is akin to an identification with individual children that it becomes possible for the teacher to appreciate the nature of the problems which are experienced by them. It becomes possible, by means of this "disciplined and sustained awareness", to recognise the distinct differences in a child's play and in his attitudes when the emphasis is upon the symbolic use of toys and materials for the expression of



phantasy, as compared with his attitudes and types of play when the emphasis is upon his appreciation of and attempts to solve problems of objective relationships of size, shape, colour, cause and effect and so on.

The importance of thus recognising the particular emphasis in a child's play is that in fostering his optimum development the teacher needs to perceive the problem that the child perceives; i.e., she must begin "on his level" if she is to play her part in helping him to discover the "bridge" by which he can achieve adjustment to external reality while also finding creative expression for his inner life of phantasy. Dr. Susan Isaacs, discussing the relation between phantasy and reality,<sup>1</sup> describes how, from the records of spontaneous make-believe play among a group of children between 2 and 7 years of age "... it was possible to show the various ways in which such imaginative play, arising ultimately from unconscious phantasies, wishes and anxieties, creates practical situations which call for knowledge of the external world. These situations may then often be pursued for their own sake, as problems of learning and understanding, and thus lead on to actual discoveries of external fact or to verbal judgment and reasoning."<sup>2</sup>

The teacher's ability to perceive the problem that the child perceives is, in effect, an ability to appreciate life as it appears to the child. If one were on his physical level, one would appear to live in a world in which relationships were quite different; e.g., people, from his height of about three feet, appear to be made up predominantly of skirts and trouser legs. The large dining-room table, seen more often by the young child from beneath than from the top, is suggestive of a shelter or den. The relationships are very different from those perceived by adults. The same is often true in connection with the attempts of young children to find the reasons for things. Dr. Susan Isaacs, referring to the child's power of reasoning,<sup>3</sup> says: "When, for example, the little two-year-old coming home from a walk on a wet day takes out his handkerchief to wipe the gate post dry and his mother says, 'I shouldn't do that—the wind will dry it,' he stands thoughtfully for a moment and says, 'Wind dry it, wind got hankie,' he is recalling his previous experience and making a leap of constructive, logical imagination to solve the problem of how the wind can dry the gatepost." The relationships appre-

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *The Nature and Function of Phantasy, Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, p. 111, Hogarth Press, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> See also S. Isaacs, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, pp. 97-110, Routledge, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> S. Isaacs, *Educational Value of the Nursery School*, pp. 16-17, Nursery School Association of Great Britain.



ciated by this two-year-old child are not those that would be accepted as logical in the adult sense, yet, in terms of the child's experience, and at his own level, this solution was a perfectly logical one. Similarly, the small girl I once observed in a seaside boarding-house. She was very upset when she found that the clock had stopped just before the family was due to go down to the sands for the afternoon, assumed that *time* had stopped and wailed, "Shan't we be able to go out?"

Since it is vital to the young child to discover meaning in the world around him, and since he has the capacity to discover the significant relationships in the solution of the problems that *he* perceives, it follows that one of the first essentials in meeting the needs of young children is to be aware of the problems that the child is trying to solve. This leads on to specific considerations of practical and experimental procedure in the nursery school, bearing in mind particularly the importance of appreciating the significance for the child himself of the experiences offered to him.

A real awareness of the child's grasp of problems at different stages between the ages of two and five presupposes an understanding of the developmental differences between the younger and older children and of their changing needs. The young two- or three-year-old child whose equilibrium (in both the physical and the emotional sense) is easily upset needs to be in a small group, not only because of his greater dependence upon adults but because he needs peace and a quiet corner where he can pursue, without unnecessary interruption, his own exploration of materials. By some limitation of the age range of the group, the teacher could ensure that the very young child is not faced with the complexity of ideas and contacts which is likely to happen if the group includes children of 4 to 5 years of age. With children nearer his own age, the contacts are more likely to be of the kind to lead to "overlapping" in self-expressive use of materials, in the solving of simple manipulative problems, and in the identifications in dramatic play, thus opening up for these children the possibilities of satisfying, socially reciprocal play. This reciprocity is likely to be of far more value to the developing child than to be constantly in a subordinate position to children of 4 to 5 years of age who, by reason of their size, experience and prestige, can be so overwhelming, even in their protectiveness towards the younger children in the group.

#### THE CHALLENGES IN THE NURSERY SCHOOL AS RELATED TO THE FUNCTION OF THE TEACHER

Given the kinds of materials which present a variety of challenges,



and given conditions in which those challenges may be explored, children between 2 and 5 years show not only varying degrees of skill at the different ages but also increasing ability, as they grow older, to be aware of more complex relationships. This is particularly evident in their various forms of constructive play and in their growing ability to solve practical problems. It is of vital importance, if the potentialities of young children are to be developed to the full, that the environment should keep pace with the developmental needs of the children—in particular, in the provision of conditions which give scope for the developing child's capacity for dealing with more complex relationships. This is specially important for the child of 4 to 5 years who can become so difficult if he "outgrows" his environment, but who, on the other hand, can be so workmanlike and sensible if the setting for his growth is a dynamic rather than a static one. In Nursery School B, for example, there was one small group of 4 to 5 year olds who on several successive days were rushing around the nursery in what seemed to be a somewhat aimless way, sometimes upsetting other children as they darted about the room. We were struck by their ease and confidence in their relationships with each other and in their general behaviour, but felt rather disturbed by the dissipation of their energy in this seemingly aimless racing around. We realised, as we watched these children, that they were so much "at home" in the nursery that there was no longer anything that presented any challenge to them. Since the ideas which these children were expressing in their play were associated with "soldiers", in particular with "fighting" and "shooting", it was clear that any challenges which might be offered to the children would have to be in line with their immediate interests. This was, in a sense, a situation similar to those in which children who wanted to be included in some form of group dramatic play had to use identical or complementary methods in order to be accepted into the group; the acceptance of the "outsider" by the group depended upon his ability to fit in with the pattern of the group phantasy. So, also, it seemed that the teacher needed to find an appropriate approach if the ideas which she wished to share with the children were to be accepted by them. In order to find such an approach, she needed to be sensitive to the ideas the children were expressing, to appreciate their methods of expressing them, yet, at the same time, to realise how limited were the children's ideas because of their limited experience, and to recognise that she had a definite part to play in extending their knowledge and experience; she was then likely to be able to provide just the right materials at the right moment and in a way that would be appre-



ciated and used by the children. On this occasion, a picture book about soldiers was specially provided for children who were playing "soldiers", and at the same time a variety of materials was supplied that might make it possible for the children to carry out some of the ideas that might appeal to them in the book. An old blanket was provided for making a tent; it was one of the first things to be seized upon by the children and draped over a triangular climbing frame. Pieces of material and short strips of lath were provided for making flags; some were made by the children and fixed to the top of the tent. Some small enamel bowls did duty as "tin hats"; these were proudly worn by the "soldiers" as they set to work to furnish their tent with furniture and crockery from the Home Corner, and then sat inside to eat their "dinner". Shooting and fighting almost disappeared because of the wider interpretation of being a "soldier" to which the teacher had helped the children.

On another occasion, when a similar problem of rather diffuse and aimless behaviour among the older boys had to be dealt with, two pulleys were put up in the playroom and some blocks were specially provided with hooks screwed in at one end for hauling up on the pulleys. The action of the pulley intrigued the boys when they found the block moving *up* as they pulled the rope *down*. It was not long, however, before they began looking round for more things with which to experiment, and then began a long period during which these boys found for themselves quite difficult problems to solve. As one watched them, one could see how, having solved some specific problem, they would look around for something more difficult, but which, at the same time, would give them a chance of testing out the validity of the solution they had just worked out. For instance, when they had explored all the possibilities of hauling up the blocks by fastening the pulley hook into the hook on the blocks, they searched round for bigger and heavier things to haul up. First they found a horse on wheels, and managed to fasten the pulley hook round the handle of the horse; there was great excitement as the horse was hauled up to the top of the store-cupboard. Next a bicycle tyre was brought along, then a car tyre, and again the children tried to fit the hook round the tyre as they had fitted it round the handle of the horse. The tyre was too big for the hook, so they then tried to fit the hook into the tyre; however, the tyre slipped off the hook as they began to pull. Again and again they tried, then one boy suddenly grasped the tyre, drew the pulley cord through the tyre and made a loop round the tyre by hooking the pulley hook round the cord. They pulled the tyre up in triumph, then hauled down the horse and used the same method for hauling it up again.



All kinds of big things were brought along to be pulled up in this way; each time the boys hauled things up on the loop instead of on the hook there were shouts of triumph. When, however, a tea chest was dragged along to the pulley by one boy, they seemed for a time to be faced with an insoluble problem. They tried first by fitting the hook under the rim of the box; the hook simply slipped out. The bottom of the box was partly broken so they tried to fit the hook into the broken part of the box. The same thing happened. Then one boy tried to use the method of looping which had been so successful before; he drew the pulley cord through the bottom of the box hoping to pull it right through to make the loop; however, the pulley rope was too short. At this point, the teacher, seeing how the boys were trying to solve this problem, placed a ball of strong string nearby. At once they realised what might be done with the string. A piece was cut off, and this was put right through the box and fastened on the outside. The pulley hook was then placed under the string and the children began to heave on the pulley cord. They managed to lift the box a few inches before the string came apart as they had not been able to fasten it securely. There was then a shift in emphasis, when they began to concentrate upon ways of fastening the string securely. In this pulley play, each problem discovered and solved by the children opened up other possibilities and other problems, and in finding the solutions to these problems the children were able to co-operate with each other in amicable and workmanlike ways, so long as there were problems to be solved. The children tended to become quarrelsome if the play became desultory and lacking in purpose.

There were occasions when it was the teacher's initial response to a child's ideas which determined whether or not such "problem-solving" might be carried on by individuals or groups: she could herself react either positively or negatively. Horace, 4½ years, who was a very intelligent boy in Nursery School B, came in one morning announcing that he wanted to make a "real fountain". He might easily have been discouraged if he had not had a teacher who was receptive to the children's ideas. Fortunately for Horace, his teacher was as eager for him to be successful in his venture as he was to do it, but she was aware also of the value to him of discovering and solving his problems for himself as they arose, and did not attempt to deprive him of this satisfaction by providing him with a ready-made "fountain". It was Horace who found all the pieces of rubber tubing from the water troughs, and who tried in various ways to join them together by tying, by sticking, and so on. When he found that it was impossible to join them satisfactorily, he asked the teacher



for a long piece of tubing to stretch from the tap in the bathroom, right across the playroom and into the garden. She pointed out to him that she would have to buy some, but that the shopkeeper would not know how much was needed; she then gave him a ball of string so that he could find out exactly how long the tubing should be. Horace collected a mate and together they used the string to "measure" from the tap to the garden, cut off the length of string, and handed it to the teacher, telling her that this was what they needed. At her suggestion, and with some help from her, they used the "measuring-stick" (yard-stick) and counted how many yards of tubing would have to be bought. Thus Horace had the satisfaction not only of fixing his tubing to the tap and of making a "real fountain" but of being responsible for every step in the making of the fountain. It was then that a new range of problems was discovered, the first being that when the tap was turned on full, the long tubing was difficult to control; the children then decided to use a big water trough, to fill it by means of the long tubing, and to use the stirrup pump for the fountain; they then found that they could make adjustments which resulted in either a jet or a spray. A great deal of group experimental activity followed the making of the "fountain".

The teacher's main concern was not to tell the children what to do, or to show them how to do things, but to help them to arrive at the significant relationships for themselves, and to enable them to make use of those relationships in their activities and in solving their problems. Her appreciation of the significant relationships that could be grasped by children at different stages of their development gave her the clue as to the kinds of materials needed by the children. There were, for instance, considerable differences between the youngest and the oldest children in the nursery school. A two-year-old and a four-year-old might both be interested in ships, but whereas the former might sit happily in one box and call it his "ship", the latter was much more likely, with his special mates, to spend several days putting boxes together, fixing on funnels, masts, and possibly a hold and a crane; making flags; hauling up cargo, and so on, possibly even making himself a sailor's hat so that he might be recognised as belonging to the crew of the ship.

It follows that the teacher must be ready to share any of the interests that arise, and must make it clear to the children that she does indeed share their interests and that she has her own special contribution to make, whether it be by the books and pictures she provides, by appropriate materials for use by the children offered by



her just at the right time, or by her discussion with the children and by her readiness to help them to find answers to their own questions. She does not do the thinking for the children, but provides them with the raw materials for their own thinking.

One sometimes finds in nursery schools the kind of equipment that is ready-made, too elaborate, even too realistic and unadaptable, and that may not stimulate thought in the children because it does not offer the kinds of challenges that call forth effort from the children. What are needed in the nursery playroom are the kinds of adaptable materials that will allow the children to do their own thinking, and which offer scope for experimental, creative and constructive work. Included in these materials should be paint, provided in a variety of ways; clay, dough, and paper-pulp; water (together with materials that lead to various kinds of experiments); sand (with provision for experiments with pulleys and balances as well as for use in more obvious ways); pieces of wood of various shapes and sizes, lengths of dowelling, laths, broom handles and battens, wooden boxes of all kinds (tea chests, orange, apple, egg and tomato boxes), one or two thick logs or blocks of wood for children who want to gain satisfaction by banging in nails, and the kinds of tools which children need and can manage; a large box adapted as a sawing bench; all kinds of oddments such as match boxes, small cardboard cylinders, fruit baskets, various kinds and sizes of cardboard boxes including shoe boxes and strong cartons; large and small tins; packing paper; oddments of string, wire, cellophane, and so on.

The type of equipment that can be used by children for various kinds of domestic activity is most essential, so that there may be daily opportunities for the children to bath their rubber, plastic or wooden dolls, or to wash their dolls' clothes and bedding and even to wash their own painting aprons; for scrubbing, sweeping and polishing; for "cooking" and for washing up afterwards; for cleaning windows, and occasionally for cleaning spoons, shoes, door handles; for scrubbing potatoes and other root vegetables, and in the summer, such special jobs as shelling peas and beans. At the same time, besides all these opportunities for identification with the mother in "real" activities, there need to be ample opportunities and simple adaptable equipment for identification with "mother" in phantasy play. I am inclined to think that what children themselves can help to make is likely to be of far more value to them than a large amount of expensive ready-made equipment. The most expensive doll cannot take the place, in the small child's affection (girl's or boy's), of the rag doll or wooden doll that she (or he) has helped to



make, particularly if the child has also found a box for the doll's bed and has made the bedding for it. The "creating" of the "baby" and the provision for its care, both of which demand quite a lot of effort from a four-year-old, have a positive effect upon a child's feeling-life which is far more penetrating than the superiority of possessing one of the most expensive dolls that can be bought. Discarded clothing or blankets or oddments of loosely woven material are suitable for doll-making; simple bag shapes are more suitable than the more complicated shapes given in a doll pattern; the stuffing of these bags, which most children enjoy doing, can be done with any kind of soft paper or worn-out stockings cut up beforehand into manageable sizes (this can be done by the children themselves if their scissors are of the kind that will cut). The children can use large needles and wool for sewing up these stuffed bags and for attaching the arms and legs to the body of the doll.

The clothes which the children make for their dolls should express the children's ideas of clothes rather than the adult's; thus a child of four years of age may be quite happy to wrap a piece of material round her doll and sew it on the doll or tie it on with a piece of brightly coloured ribbon. As their ideas and their skill develop, however, children may want to evolve something that approximates more nearly to a frock or coat. Kitty, almost five years of age, who had become attached to a new Teddy bear, on finding a piece of soft woollen material, volunteered to "make a coat for Teddy". She insisted on cutting it into three strips, the strip for the back being wider than the strips for the two front pieces. She sought an adult's help, not in the actual sewing, but in having the material held steady while she sewed up the seams. While she pushed her needle in and out, the wool fell in such a way that blanket stitches were formed. She was very pleased with the pattern made by the stitches. When the seams were completed, she cut off a tiny strip of material and proceeded to sew it on to the top edge of the back for a loop by which to hang it up. She then asked for buttons and sewed these on, then dug her scissors into the material to make the holes for the buttons. She was very much amused, when she tried to put the coat on the Teddy bear, to realise that she had forgotten to make any arm holes. These she did quickly by cutting holes in the material in the appropriate places, dressed the Teddy bear, and proudly showed him to the other children. One other thing she demanded: a hook on the wall in a corner of the playroom where the Teddy bear's coat could be hung. Kitty had shown no sign of being interested in the ready-made dresses of the dolls in the nursery; in fact, she had given the impression that she was



a somewhat retarded child, lacking in ideas and initiative. Her making of the coat showed us how wrong that impression had been.

Wooden dolls can be made very simply with inch or inch and a half batten for the body and strips of lath for the arms and legs. Some children derive great satisfaction from legitimately being both aggressive and creative at the same time, e.g., driving nails into the head of the wooden doll for eyes, nose and mouth, or into the body to make "buttons". Other children who like tiny things that can be held tightly in one hand or tucked away into pockets love to help to turn "dolly" clothes' pegs into peg dolls. Even the simplest method of doing this, merely by wrapping a small piece of material round the peg and holding it in place by sewing or by tying a piece of ribbon round it, can be very satisfying to the child who has thus created a peg-doll baby. Older children, given an exciting variety of bits and pieces, will like to use tiny pieces of lace, ribbon, fur, plastic, silk, velvet, etc., in dressing their dolls. One of the reasons for the popularity of peg dolls among the older children in the nursery school is that a shoe box can be turned into a home for them, furniture being simply made with very small cardboard boxes and oddments of wood, e.g., tiny blocks of various shapes and sizes combined with short strips of lath. Some of the older children may be able to manage to make match-box furniture but usually only with considerable help and suggestion from an adult. It is much more important that the children should find the kind of material that they themselves can put together and pronounce "just right" for a bed, or table, or piano.

"Dressing-up", which is often so popular among young children, becomes specially valuable if the older children help to make the things they need. If ready-made costumes are provided (e.g., a Red Indian outfit), when the child has put on the Red Indian suit there is nothing for him to do except chase around and "kill" people. If, on the other hand, sacks are provided, it is very simple for four-year-olds to turn them into tunics and trousers; for the tunics, cutting holes for the neck and arms, for the trousers, cutting off the bottom of the sack and half-way up the middle of the sack, and sewing up the sides of the tunic and the trousers. The attitude of the child who has battled with and overcome the difficulties of making his own tunic and trousers is one of pride in his achievement and confidence in his power to be big and grown-up. He is then ready to try to construct his own tent. Anything that is provided ready-made for the children to wear should be as simple and adaptable as possible, with large buttons and button-holes which the children can manage by themselves or with the help of another child.



In the garden, adaptable materials are far more important than expensive ready-made climbing frames and chutes. Tree-trunks; ropes suspended vertically and horizontally; planks, ladders, boxes and barrels; tyres suspended from ropes or used on the ground; these are the kinds of adaptable materials that can be used in a variety of ways. Gardening tools are essential, and a plot of ground where children can dig freely; wheelbarrows or boxes on wheels are needed for carting leaves, stones and earth.

Enough has probably been said here to indicate the type of provision that is likely to be of most value when thinking of the child's all-round development, and of the importance of "challenge" in fostering optimum development. There appear to be no hard and fast differences between boys and girls, particularly among the younger children; there are some boys who need rag or wooden dolls quite as much as some girls do, and who settle down with great determination to make their own dolls. Similarly, there are girls who work for long periods at the woodwork bench, and both boys and girls enjoy "cooking". As the children near five years of age, however, there seems to be a tendency for older boys to "gang together" in "workman" play or "gang play". But whatever the nature of the play, the most important things to remember are that, in their use of the materials provided, children should be able to discover significant relationships appropriate to their stage of development and to their developmental needs; that the environment should offer to the children scope for pursuing their individual or group interests, and the setting in which "overlapping" can take place among the younger children and true co-operation among the older children; that it should give the basis for identification with adults; that it should provide opportunities and scope for achievement. At the same time, there should be provision for legitimate outlets for aggressive energy, and, for those who need it, opportunity for symbolic use of materials.

*The function of the teacher in helping children to meet the challenges in the environment*

It seems to me that there should be nothing arbitrary about the selection and arrangement of materials for the children's use. Above all else, what is needed on the part of the teacher is a sincere and understanding appreciation of the personal quality of the children's use of materials and an intuitive sensitivity towards their forms of self-expression. It is that appreciation and sensitivity which lead her to a sure recognition of what it means to meet individual needs (in terms of the actual provision of play materials); to provide the



"bridge" by which the child, who is concerned with his own personal problems or individual phantasies (i.e., on a "feeling level"), may pass to a concern with the problems of external relationships in real life (i.e., on a "thinking level").

An appreciation of the challenges which are encountered by young children in the play materials they use, and of the problems they discover which are within their power to solve, demands from the teacher a degree of awareness that must also be a subtle combination of intuition, imagination and intelligence; it also demands from her an open-minded and out-going approach not only towards people and towards children in particular, but also towards all the varied ideas put forward by the children, whether it be by their symbolic or their representational use of materials, or by their conversations and questions.

Although the teacher has a very important part to play in her provision of activities and play materials, it is primarily with the children and with their individual needs that she is concerned. To fulfil her function as a teacher of nursery school children, she must have a sure grasp of the emotional, social and intellectual needs of children of two to five years of age, and must be aware of all that this implies in the practical application of her knowledge in terms of the kinds of experiences needed by the children. In her interpretation of such "experiences", she has both to recognise the individual stage of development in the accepted sense and also to have some awareness of the "reality" with which the individual child is concerned. She can best achieve this by endeavouring to understand the interrelatedness of development and of behaviour rather than by thinking in watertight compartments. The "wholeness" of a child's experience needs to be recognised and provided for; this is something which cannot be achieved by thinking in terms of a more or less arbitrary selection of play activities.

It is when one becomes aware of the dynamic aspects of play activities that one begins to recognise that children are using their play materials for very vital forms of self-expression which seem to be essential to their personal adjustment. One also comes to realise that their experimenting, exploration, construction and problem-solving in their use of materials are equally essential for their all-round development. Such forms of play provide the basis for the child's achievement of satisfactory social relationships with his contemporaries, and play a vital part in his intellectual growth and in his endeavour to understand and to make himself "master" of the reality both in the external world and in his inner psychic life.



*The function of the teacher in meeting the children's emotional needs*

It is in their attempts to understand these aspects of reality, and in particular those situations which have given rise to difficulties, that young children sometimes show a kind of primitive logic. In such situations, in which thought and feeling seem to be inextricably interwoven, perhaps the most striking form of "primitive logic", often accompanied by very strong feelings, may be seen in the young child when a new baby arrives in the family. In the records given in Chapter Two there are examples of such forms of primitive logic. They show also how, if the teacher can understand the way in which the child reasons in such situations, she may take steps to offset his feelings of rejection and deprivation by proving to him that he is loved and valued and cared for. This is most effectively done for the very young child or one who is severely disturbed, by making contact with him on the level of his feelings rather than in trying to reason with him. Sometimes this is best done by using a form of symbolism that is likely to fit in with the child's form of self-expression; for instance, I have found, in helping a number of children who have the withdrawn, depressed appearance of the child who feels deprived and rejected, that a gift, which means "love" to him, matters to him a great deal. It may seem strange that the gift that such children seem to treasure most is the simple gift of a rag doll or a tiny peg doll in a little box bed or in a shoe-box house. Sometimes the gift is accepted and treasured, the peg doll is carried around in its box or even in the child's pocket; sometimes it is rejected outright, or is accepted only in order that the doll may be rejected. Whether this gift is accepted or rejected, it seems to have a symbolic value for the child, since by this means the teacher communicates something to him in a way that he can understand, that makes him feel that he is not alone with his unhappy feelings, for this person has demonstrated to him that she understands, to some extent, what is wrong, and that she is someone upon whom he can depend for support against his strong feelings.

Approaches which are not only in line with the child's needs, but are made through channels which young children can comprehend are often found to be the means by which children who feel deprived and rejected may be helped. The clue lies not so much in the actual situation as in the child's interpretation of that situation in terms of his "feeling-life". If he *feels* deprived and rejected because it appears to him that he has been passed over for another, it is this inner need that has to be met. The actual situation has to be taken into account, for there one may find the circumstances



giving rise to the initial feelings of deprivation or rejection. It seems to be the "alone-ness" that plays such havoc with a child's feelings, and it is the comfortable feeling of having someone "with him" and "for him" which makes such a difference to him, especially when that "someone" shows clearly in ways that are appropriate to his needs that she understands. This understanding on the part of the teacher must be such that it comprehends and acquiesces in the child's response to the proffered gift; to be able safely to reject the gift and still feel sure of the adult's love and understanding may do just as much for a child as the gift that is accepted and treasured.

The importance of such small and seemingly unimportant indications of an adult's understanding cannot really be fully appreciated unless one has become aware not only of the intensity of a child's feelings (sometimes hidden behind a "withdrawn" exterior), but of the conflicting nature of those feelings; good feelings of love and bad feelings of hate. The child in the throes of a temper tantrum is at the mercy of uncontrollable feelings of hate accompanied by strong feelings of guilt and anxiety. If the treatment of such a child is seen from the purely superficial view of the convenience of the adult, one is likely to find that the child is regarded as very "naughty"; he is a disturbance, and therefore he must be temporarily segregated from the group. Such a procedure, however, leaves the child completely at the mercy of the uncontrollable feelings just when he needs support against them. If one realises the terror which must grip a child when these feelings possess him, it will be clear that the treatment he needs is the positive, firm support of the adult who still remains comfortably "alive" despite the aggressive attack inherent in a child's temper tantrums, and who still has faith in the child's good feelings at a time when they appear to be non-existent.

There are certain outward signs indicative of an adult's grasp of the situation (i.e., from a child's point of view), proof that she can give the support he needs; that she understands that the child who is in this state needs to be soothed and reassured; that he needs to do something to assuage his feelings of guilt and anxiety; that, because he feels himself to be a "monster", and may even be regarded by other children as such when his "wild animal" feelings have got the better of him, he needs help in re-establishing himself in the group. Furthermore, since such feelings are painful and are associated with unpleasant experiences such as the pain and discomfort accompanying an uncontrollable outburst of screaming, kicking or sobbing, he needs help in finding safe, legitimate and positive and satisfying outlets for such feelings, otherwise the discomfort and



pain of them and the associated guilt and anxiety may drive the feelings underground.

From experience in dealing with children when they are in the grip of these "bad feelings", it has been possible to discover what are the indications most appropriate to a child of an adult's grasp of his most pressing and most immediate needs:

(a) For soothing and reassuring: washing away the tears, sponging the face to cool it, even perhaps, when a child has become hysterical, giving him a warm bath. Washing and bathing must be accompanied by quiet, reassuring and rather soothing "patter" about helping him to feel better.

(b) For assuaging feelings of guilt and anxiety: providing opportunity for reparation, for "making better" what has been damaged or destroyed. Young children, in the grip of angry feelings, sometimes express verbally this urge to destroy when they shout, "I'll kill you dead! I'll cut you up in little bits!" It is very usual for such threats to be followed soon afterwards by such remarks as "I'll make you better now." Sometimes this "damaging" and "making better" are played out by an individual child in phantasy play. One four-year-old boy, whose mother was in hospital, spent an afternoon with an aunt playing out this situation of "killing" and "making better". He alternated between being the "bad man" who came to hurt and to kill (his face and actions typifying the "killer") and being "Jesus" coming to "make you better", when his impersonation was of gentleness and compassion.

This need of the child to make reparation provides a solution to one of the problems that has to be dealt with in the nursery school, namely, in connection with the kind of action to be taken when one child bites another. One's sympathies are usually with the bitten child, but, in fact, it is often the biter who needs almost more help and reassurance than the bitten child. The reassurance is far more effective if it can be done by practical means, i.e., if the "making better" can be done by the child who caused the injury, an opportunity being given to him to dab something soothing on the injury. The change in attitude of the child who has been allowed to carry out the treatment is sometimes quite spectacular; he changes, while doing this, from being the aggressor to being the protector, to some extent because, at the same time, he is assuaging his own sense of guilt.

(c) For help in re-establishing himself in the group, he may need to be the teacher's special helper for a time, doing some important job such as scrubbing a painting easel, or the clay or dough boards, or digging holes in the garden for the bulbs she is going to plant; it



should be a "man-sized" job—something that the child will regard as a worth-while challenge.

(d) For help in finding safe, legitimate, positive and satisfying outlets for his aggressive feelings, the child needs a teacher who will appreciate why he sometimes hits and stamps on toy animals and rag dolls, and who will accept this substitution of inanimate objects for the people these objects represent. Occasionally I have found individual children whose attacks are directed towards some specific part of another child's body, e.g., a child's eyes. Constant watchfulness is not enough, since this may be merely a negative, preventive measure: if the child is to be helped, a more positive approach is necessary. In one case in which I met this problem the four-year-old girl used to hug smaller children so violently that she made them cry; she then used her handkerchief to wipe their eyes, but her action was in the nature of an aggressive attack upon the eyes, so that the other children became terrified of her. Incessant watchfulness on the part of the staff to some extent prevented these incidents, but it was the child herself who found the activity which was not only satisfying to her but diverted her from her attacks on eyes. It may have been a curious coincidence, though it seemed to me to be a psychologically sound and appropriate choice, when this child took a bucket of water, scrubbing brush, soap and floor cloth, and proceeded to scrub the floor with a pronounced digging action, making a lot of water on the floor, then mopping it up with the floor cloth. She found this activity so satisfying that she scrubbed day after day; as a result of her interest in this activity, the teacher no longer found it necessary to be constantly watchful. In another case in which this kind of attack gave rise to difficulties in the group, the four-year-old boy was invited to help to make a simple glove puppet with a stuffed bag-shaped head. He refused to help until he saw that there were pieces of blue felt to be sewn on for eyes; he then immediately claimed the head, and gained great satisfaction both from "attacking" the eyes with his needle, and from his sense of achievement when the puppet thus became a "person" and was regarded with pride and pleasure by the other children and the teacher when it was used in a "puppet-show".

Perhaps the importance of such activities in a therapeutic sense is that while the primitive urge is being satisfied, instead of the aggression being directed towards people themselves, the child is able to accept "substitutes" so that the expression of his aggressive urge is no longer accompanied by feelings of guilt and anxiety, but rather with the satisfaction of achievement which merits the approbation of others.



There are certain activities which, in a general way, are particularly valuable for these children who need special help in positive ways. They need to work with wood and with such tools as hammers and saws; older children can also use a bradawl or a drill. They need to be given opportunities for scrubbing, and, so far as the children are concerned, the dirtier the object the better, for this gives them greater proof of their ability to make things clean, and to clear up messes. Cutting with scissors, sewing, digging, breaking up coal, tearing up paper, mincing dry crusts, chopping up or digging holes in blocks of salt, these are aggressive activities. But in every such form of activity there should be a positive outcome so that the children not only tear, cut, break up, prick, make holes and chop up, but in so doing they contribute to something that is being created; paper that is torn up is used to stuff a doll's pillow; the coal that is broken up is used for the fire; seeds and bulbs are planted in the holes dug in the garden; the crust crumbs are fed to the birds; the crushed salt is used in the making of dough for use as a modelling material. The teacher's recognition of the child's need to "make good", which is given effect in this way, thus becomes the basis of a special relationship between the teacher and the child. A close bond is established because the teacher has been intuitively aware of and has given recognition to the problem, not merely in its superficial aspect, as a phenomenon in the external world, but in its more fundamental aspect, as an externalisation of the child's need.

It is not only in meeting the personal needs of individual children in ways such as these that the building up of this special relationship is important, but also in the establishment of a positive relationship between the child and the group. A clear and obvious recognition of the child as potentially "good" and capable of doing "good things" is one of the ways of ensuring this special relationship. To give children in special need the opportunity to be the ones who do the important cleaning jobs—the scrubbing of tables and of Home Corner equipment and so on—is one way of achieving this. The value of such jobs is enhanced for the children if the teacher shows her appreciation of their effort and achievement; one of the ways most appreciated by the children is the simple pictorial record kept by the teacher in a special "Helpers' Book", a book in which the children can find pictures of themselves doing these "special jobs", and can say with pride and satisfaction, "That's a picture of me scrubbing the table." It is well worth while to save such jobs for the children to do; the nursery helpers (young trainees) could assist in this rehabilitation of the children by helping the children to get the greatest satisfaction out of doing these jobs themselves.



*The teacher's function in strengthening the children's hold on external reality*

A great responsibility rests upon the teacher of young children, particularly in her readiness to accept her children in every aspect of their development, their feeling life and their external real life, as a preliminary to helping them in their adjustment to reality. She needs at every stage to appreciate the vital needs of the children which she must meet in positive ways and with the education of the whole child as her main objective.

Interpreted in practical terms, it requires from her such an intimate knowledge of the less obvious but vitally important developmental "thrusts" in early childhood that she is able to respond with understanding to the children at each stage of their development—in particular, at the stage when the children's growing awareness of themselves, of other people and of the relation between the two are expressed in various forms of experimental and playful aggression, and in the group identification with aggressive characters such as cowboys and Indians, soldiers, space-men, bad men and robbers, and so on. One of the important functions of the teacher is, that while accepting the phantasy basis of much of the young child's play, either individually or in groups, and of group aggressive play, she needs to *strengthen the child's hold on reality*. When, therefore, young children play so persistently at cowboys and Indians, chasing, taking prisoners, tying them up, "shooting" and "killing" them, instead of trying to stamp out this form of play it is infinitely of more value to the children if the teacher makes this the starting-point for opening up for the children more creative possibilities—for building wigwams, for making tunics and head-dresses, hobby-horses and canoes. Young children who have thus found, with the teacher's co-operation and help, a wider interpretation of "Red Indians" than is conveyed to them on the cinema or television screen, and have been helped by an imaginative provision of materials, by good picture books, by stories, pictures, and discussion, to give creative expression to this interpretation, often pass from a purely dramatic representation to one that gives to the children a deep sense of achievement by reason of the things made and used, and the new skills learnt in the process of constructing and creating; it may even pass into a truly creative expression when three or four "Indians" get down on the floor to paint a long picture together. The creative quality of such a picture reflects the intense dramatic interest in really being "Indians". That creative, "alive" quality is not always as evident in pictures painted by children who have not had the satisfying dramatic experience reinforced by the constructive inter-



pretation of the dramatic interest.

Dr. Susan Isaacs in *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, discussing the educational aims of the Malting House School and, in particular, the relation between the world of phantasy and the world of objective reality and the necessity for educators to understand the part they play,<sup>1</sup> says: "... We held one of our tasks as educators to be that of counteracting the dramatic tensions in the child's mind; and the only way to do this is to bring in the real world at every possible point. The way out from the world of phantasy is through the constant appeal to objective reality, to physical and social facts, and to interests and activities directed upon these. In the external world the dramatic inner tensions of the child's mind and the adult's are deflected and diffused. . . . Our constant aim was therefore to throw our own weight always on the side of an appeal to the world of objective fact, and to stimulate intelligent observation and judgment on the part of the children." Dr. Isaacs describes the school "... as a point of vantage for the child in his efforts to understand the real world, and to adapt himself to it. It should be a place of shelter for him; but not in the sense that it shuts the larger world away from him. Its task is to bring the world to him, in ways and at a pace fixed by his needs and interests. The school, the teacher and the teaching alike are simply a clarifying medium, through which the facts of human life and the physical world are brought within the measure of the child's mind at successive stages of growth and understanding."

It seems to me that the "facts of human life and the physical world" should include *any* facts to which the children's interests reach out. It follows that the teacher's interests should also reach out in the same directions as the children's as well as drawing the children towards those interests which she hopes they will share with her, so that she can, at every point, strengthen their hold on reality.

A child who has had difficulties in personal adjustment, and who has attended a nursery school where it is he himself who matters, and where his developmental needs are realised and understood, will have been able to find satisfactory and acceptable outlets for his feelings, to find the impetus for much of his exploration in the nursery school by means of such self-expression, and will have begun to find the answers to some of his problems and thus have begun to achieve that "coming to terms" with the dual aspects of reality which is essential for his mental health both in early childhood and possibly also in later life.

<sup>1</sup> S. Isaacs, *Intellectual Growth in Young Children*, ch. II, d, Routledge, 1930.



By the time they are five years of age most nursery school children are well on the way to achieving that socially desirable form of independence which finds most satisfying expression both in co-operating with adults and with other children and in the group pursuit of mutual interests. They have gained a considerable degree of skill in maintaining stable relations with their friends in the pursuit of such interests and in the solving of problems arising in the practical situations they meet; they have also reached a stage in their development when, by reason of their experiences in the nursery school, they can make a relatively easy transition to life in the infant school. Furthermore, by the time they leave the nursery school, they seem to have gone quite a long way towards adjustment both to the reality of their inner psychic life and to external reality.



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